



Fifth Session- Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



Vol. XLIX No. 2 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 7, 1999

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley, Hon.	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	Lib.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 7, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Electoral Boundary Revision

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege. I want to assure you that I do not do this frivolously. This is the first time in the six years that I have been an MLA that I bring forward a matter of privilege. I realize that matters of privilege are not usually brought up very often, but in two days this is the third one so I think this is a very unusual circumstance. It is not a "me, too" matter of privilege.

This matter of privilege was something I thought of doing for some time, but this is the earliest opportunity that I have to bring it forward because I first wanted to check the throne speech to assure myself that the matter was not covered in the throne speech. That matter of privilege I am bringing forward is a question of contempt of this Chamber, of this parliament.

It goes back to about a week ago when I put on my uniform for the first time in a long time and my daughter saw me in it and she looked relieved. I asked her why and she says, well, now when people ask what my dad does for a living I could say he is a police officer. I said, what, you were not proud that your dad was a politician? She said, well, I am prouder that you are a police officer. That day I went to the Public Safety Building where I was with a bunch of recruits and senior officers, and generally I found many of them were glad to see me back, but some of them looked to me with suspicion because I was a politician. This goes against the reason why I have given six years of my life to this Chamber, to public service, is that I thought politicians were doing honourable things.

You know, when I was being talked into running, one of the factors was a discussion I had with Rey Pagtakhan, the member of Parliament, who reinforced upon me about the honour and the pride he has of being a politician and serving the public. But with matters of late, politicians are not held in high regard, and I am not just talking about matters going on in Manitoba. Whether we go to B.C. where Glen Clark is viewed with suspicion because of the awarding of a casino; if I go to Ottawa where Jean Chretien, the Prime Minister, people have already felt badly of him because of his cottage and the road going in there, to what has been going on in Manitoba. The public has come to think of politicians as self-serving, power seeking and manipulating the process for their own good. That is unfortunate.

My mother and father are in the gallery today and I remember someone asking my mother: are you not proud of your son? She said I was proud of him before. But before I leave this Chamber, I want us to do something that is right and honourable and that is to deal with the question of a fair election. Part of a fair election is equal representation, that all citizens of Manitoba should be assured that there will be an election fought on boundaries that reflect the true population in each ward and that the setting of the new boundaries not be used for a political agenda, not be manipulated.

I know for some it is going to be difficult. I know for myself I am not running for re-election so it has no impact on me other than the principle. I know that there are members in this Chamber, whether it is the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) or the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) and the problems it might cause them, or if it is the former Speaker or the current Speaker, there are people who it will be a difficult thing for. But it is the right and honourable thing to do, so I would ask that all members of this Chamber support the motion

that I will bring at the end of this matter of privilege.

* (1335)

Now, back in 1989, the last time this legislation was reviewed and the boundaries were changed, there were a number of speakers, including Jay Cowan, who stated, referring to the electoral commission: The fact is they have made that decision—referring to the boundaries—and any attempt by us to go back and ask them to reshape the electoral map or ask them to rethink what they are doing to the North and other areas of the province would violate the integrity of the system. As perfect as that system may be, it would do damage to the basic principle, the overall objective of an impartial and independent and timely—timely—systematic review of our electoral boundaries from time to time. That is what Jay Cowan said back then.

And then Jerry Storie at that time said: However, in the final analysis, although I regret the changes and I think they are not certainly from my perspective going to serve the interests of my constituents as well as I wish they would, we have to respect the independence of the commission, and we certainly want to avoid the perception even that boundaries, political boundaries are going to be manipulated by the Legislative Assembly. That clearly would be an unacceptable alternative.

Unfortunately, with the contempt of this Chamber, is the fact that we have not sat for nearly nine months, and we could not deal with this long before we were shortly before an election. That is the contempt, and so any partisan maneuvering here—I know that the public, regardless of how political parties spin it, regardless of how the media report it, the public are cynical. They are cynical about the media; they are cynical about politicians. It does not matter what is said. If we do not pass these boundaries and get this out of the way and restore the confidence in the electoral process of Manitoba, it holds us all in disrepute.

So, therefore, I make the motion: I move, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that this House put aside its normal

business and consider The Electoral Divisions Act and conduct no other business until The Electoral Divisions Act has been passed or defeated. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1340)

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, in response to this motion of privilege by the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), let me say that I believe I have been in this Assembly for 11 years, I have gone through the process of redistribution once before, and although redistribution sometimes leaves members with benefits in their ridings or things that they are not so happy with, at the end of the day I have always noted that for the vast majority of members, if not all, there has been the acceptance of boundaries created by our independent boundary commission. This House, in all my recollections and research, has always passed that Bill unanimously, because I think we all share with the member for The Maples the recognition that an independent Boundaries Commission having boundaries in place on a timely basis for elections is an important part of maintaining the currency of our democracy with our population shifts.

Madam Speaker, in this particular round there has been some precedent in the past where the cycle of renewing boundaries, which is a 10-year cycle that coincides with the census—over which no member of this House has control of how long the Boundaries Commission takes to do their report and their final report and get back. Sometimes it coincides with the electoral cycle of four years and does put legislatures into a situation of uncertainty as one moves the bill through the process with potential election windows, et cetera, and we are in this situation. A similar one occurred in 1969 when the redistribution and the electoral cycles corresponded and resulted, I think, in the same kind of uncertainty that the member for The Maples has outlined today.

Under the law of our province, the First Minister I believe has a responsibility to table the report within seven days of the House coming back into session, and I understand that he will be doing that today. The particular document is a very straightforward

one; it is one that we have all had access to as members for several months, since the final report has come down. I can advise honourable members that the actual bill to bring into effect the report will be ready in completed form, I am advised, by 2 p.m. tomorrow afternoon. So that bill will be ready for the House. Obviously, we have processes and procedures that we as a House with unanimous consent have the ability to alter to ensure its passage. If I recall the many numerous occasions when there has been a piece of legislation of this nature, this House has found in itself to accommodate and ensure a speedy passage.

I also can report to the House, I think without breaching any confidences, that in the normal course of conducting House business, the opposition House leader, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), and I have had some discussions. We have not yet been able to finalize a process for moving things forward at this stage, but we have had discussions about moving this bill forward recognizing—and I think the member would concur—that the lack of certainty in the process does cause a great disadvantage to the public, as we are in an election year, in preparing, whether it be associations nominating formation of founding meetings, and that to eliminate that uncertainty as soon as possible is in all of our interests and ultimately the interests of the public.

Madam Speaker, the member for The Maples, I think in very good conscience and reminding us today of that fact, brings forward this motion of privilege.

I would like to propose—and when the member spoke with his resolution, obviously if this is accepted as a motion of privilege and is passed. Given the fact that the bill is not available till tomorrow, et cetera, that the logistics of running the House cause some difficulty, I am prepared to propose today, and I think we on this side of the House would be prepared to propose if there is a willingness of all members—our rules require unanimous consent. We are prepared to propose that the Throne Speech Debate be postponed or adjourned for two days, up to two days, Thursday and Friday of this week, and that this

House accommodate the passage of the bill. It will be available as of 2 p.m. tomorrow.

So, following Question Period, if there is unanimous consent, we can give it first reading, move it into second reading. If one looks at the Hansards of previous debates, members may debate some of the theory around variations of 10 or 25 percent. Members may debate names that have been given to constituencies. Members may talk about the loss of particular constituencies. I recall the former member for Fort Rouge speaking about the loss of that particular constituency as it became Crescentwood. But if one looks at the speeches, there is not an issue of substance in this bill. This is a very straightforward piece of legislation. Many members may wish to speak for the reasons I have outlined, as is the tradition.

* (1345)

We would be prepared to grant unanimous consent to see the bill move in tomorrow. If there were more members wishing to speak tomorrow afternoon than time allowed, we could proceed. We would agree to proceed on Friday.

I think, Madam Speaker, if one looks at the amount of time that members have actually spent on the bill, two days would accommodate the traditional discussion and that we, in fact, if there was a willingness in the House, could see the bill do the required committee stage—Committee of the Whole I think is part of the procedure for this—and have Royal Assent by Friday afternoon, and the people of our province would know for certain and the political parties and candidates would know for sure that the next general election will be fought on the up-to-date boundaries. If the House were to give consent to that move, we would see an additional two days added on to the Throne Speech Debate. In fairness to the Leader of the Opposition, because I know today is by tradition of this House—the day after the throne speech is moved and seconded, the Leader of the Opposition has the opportunity to respond. That would allow today, and we certainly would want to accommodate the Leader of the Opposition to ensure that he had his opportunity which is also part of the tradition and fairness in order to see that happen.

So, Madam Speaker, we would be prepared, if there is a unanimous consent, to see that in fact happen.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would like to—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: I apologize. The honourable House leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Ashton: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I realize we have not been sitting for awhile so some of us may need name tags to recognize each other.

In fact, that is at the root of this problem. The boundaries report came out in December, and I would just respectfully say to the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) that he might want to direct some of his concerns toward the government directly because they decided not to sit in December, not to sit in January, not to sit in February, not to sit in March, not to sit in April. When they came into the session, Madam Speaker, they had the option of not ending the previous session. They could have come in—we adjourned the previous session. They decided to prorogue, which meant we deal with the throne speech which is the normal procedure, and we have proceedings in place. I want to say that we have had more than three months in which we could have been sitting and this item could have been dealt with. It was the government's choice not to do so.

I want to indicate, too, that I am somewhat surprised with the statements from the government House leader because he had indeed contacted myself. I want to go one step further and indicate that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) spoke to me personally yesterday about discussions that are ongoing in terms of I think the desire of everyone in this House to get the boundaries issue dealt with. I note the enthusiasm that we see on the government side, enthusiasm that was somewhat less apparent a number of months ago. I think the government realized the error of its ways, because if you remember it was the government that was saying that they might be running on old boundaries. I take the Premier's

conversion on this to be an honest conversion, and I suspect that there will be further discussions.

I would say to the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) that I am sure that we can work out a process that follows the rules of the House that will ensure this is passed. In fact, the one way of ensuring this—there is only one person in this House who can really ensure this. It is the Premier, because he is the one who has one thing that we have no control over. He has one card to play on this, and that is the timing of an election. I think in fact if the Premier wants to stand up and assure this House that he will not call the election before those boundaries are dealt with, we can all agree, and we can deal with it in a fair manner.

I just want to finish off, Madam Speaker, because I want to say this personally to the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), because I respect the member for The Maples and his contribution to this House, and I wish him well whenever his old, new, future career will start. But, you know, my dad was at actually the Premier's reception yesterday, and you know my parents have always told me they are proud of me for being in something I consider the most honourable profession in the province and that public service, serving my constituents, my home community of Thompson and eight surrounding communities—and I am proud of that. I want to say to the member for The Maples that I understand the concern that is out there and the cynicism about politics and politicians, and we are going to be getting into some issues later on I am sure in Question Period that talk about that cynicism, where it comes from. One of the reasons we fight as strongly as we do on those types of issues is because it is so important to preserve the integrity of politics and the people that serve the people of Manitoba, every MLA in this House.

* (1350)

I want to say to the member for The Maples: please do one thing. When you go back to your other career, please tell them to remember that politicians—it is very easy to bash politicians nowadays, but we are nothing more than citizens of this province who are elected by our fellow

citizens to serve this province. We may at times stray from the perfect mark of what we should be dealing with—and we will deal with that in a few moments too. But I say and I want to put this on the record, and I encourage the member for The Maples to go back and tell people, that all we are trying to do in this House, all 57 of us, is do the best thing for the province of Manitoba, and that is an honourable thing to do, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I am not too sure—I do want to address this very important matter of privilege that has been raised by the member for The Maples—in terms of what the position is after listening to the opposition House leader. But suffice to say, I had full intentions on somewhat lambasting and making fun of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer). I was going to talk and quote the Minister of Finance when he indicated, while I do not agree with the end results, I think I can agree with other members who say we must support the process, and we cannot tamper with that at this late date. I think on the basis I will certainly be voting in favour of this legislation, and then we are talking about the previous boundary distribution.

Given the government House leader's response, I am going to assume and make the assumption then that the government House leader is in fact speaking on behalf of the government. Having said that, it is a very critical matter of privilege. What I would do is I would cite individuals to look at Beauchesne's Citation 260. Remember later this day we would normally be dealing with the throne speech.

We believe in the Liberal Party it is inappropriate for us to be dealing with the throne speech when we have the new boundaries which could potentially be put off indefinitely because the throne speech does not make a commitment to pass these new boundaries. Let us go to Beauchesne's Citation 260: "There have been exceptions to this procedure."—and the procedure being that of a throne speech—"At the first sitting of the session in 1937, the Prime Minister did not introduce a pro forma Bill respecting the Administration of Oaths of Office. He introduced Bill No. 1, An Act Respecting Alteration in the Law Touching the Succession

to the Throne, which was read the first time and ordered for second reading at the next sitting of the House."

Madam Speaker, Beauchesne's does establish very clearly that it is not unprecedented that in fact there is good reason and just cause for this Legislature to be dealing with the critical issue of the electoral boundary redistribution. There is in fact, I would argue, an obligation on this government to accept that, and I hear that the government House leader has done that. Equally, there is an obligation on the official opposition to accept that, and I look to the leadership of the opposition party to do just that.

Madam Speaker, I can recall—and all of us knew about this well in advance—in fact, back on Monday, June 15, a quote from Hansard, because I do not necessarily want to be accused of saying this after I have seen the boundaries. On June 15—and you will know that the boundaries were released in July—and I quote: "I am sure all members are very much aware of redistribution of boundaries. From what I understand, the proposed boundaries are going to be coming out at the end of the month, the beginning of July. I think the government has a responsibility to look at what the intent of the law was. The government might want to take into consideration the need to coming back, let us say, for example, in the fall time in order to accommodate, because the last thing that I would want to see is if you have new boundaries that come forward and then there is an election that is based strictly on old boundaries when the government had the opportunity to base it on the new boundaries. Ultimately the new boundaries will prevail and it does not have an impact, the new boundaries on representation, whether or not elected officials want to acknowledge that or not."

* (1355)

Madam Speaker, obviously as the government House leader has referred, something of this nature would require unanimous consent of the Chamber in order to make it happen. Let us not forget that first, second, third and Royal Assent is, in essence, what we are looking for, so what I did is I went back to the previous Bill 11 in redistribution, and

I, like most people I am sure, am quite familiar with the rules of this Chamber.

First reading was given of that electoral reform back on May 24, 1989. Well, quite often when we introduce bills, the bill sits on the Order Paper, and nothing really comes of it until we get into the second reading. Second reading was then given on June 21, 1989. The member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) quoted a few individuals that spoke to it, and that is all. No, there were not 21 speakers. There was 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. Sixteen. That is if, in fact, our research capabilities, and we are somewhat limited, not as much resources, is in fact accurate on the count. Having said that, Madam Speaker, that was on June 21.

On June 23, it went into committee. Somewhere on my desk, to give you an idea, I brought the actual page from Hansard. It passed through committee, and I could virtually read this, it only takes a half a minute. Mr. Chairman, which was Mr. Chornopyski at the time: Committee come to order to consider Bill No. 11, The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act. We shall proceed to consider Bill No. 11 clause by clause. Clause 1, 2—Pass, pass. Preamble—Pass. Title—Pass. Bill be reported. Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

Madam Speaker, as you can see, this is something which passed in a very quick fashion. I will get right back to the relevancy of it.

Some Honourable Members: We do not want to take four weeks. That is too long.

Mr. Lamoureux: Now I am not suggesting four weeks at all. What I am suggesting—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Inkster that he should be attempting to establish why the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) has a prima facie case for a point of privilege.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the core of it, of course, is that it is indeed in contempt of the Legislature, what we have seen. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was quite right in his assertion when he said that we have

not been sitting, with the exception of yesterday, of course, since June 29, 1998. There was an obligation, and that is a point in which the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) spoke well of, and what we are trying to do is to be able to support that particular argument.

The last redistribution, in essence, went through quite quickly in this Legislature and could very easily go through quickly again. I talked to Elections Manitoba earlier today, in terms of—and I think members need to be aware of this. I talked to them earlier today and wanted to find out what process they went through. In December of 1997 a researcher was hired, or secretary was hired, where they did some background work. In February of 1998 the commission first met. Between February and May, map options in working with Census Canada material was brought in. On July 1, draft was released to the public. In May, we received the first copy of the boundaries, of the existing ones, where it showed the discretion. A good example, and I look to the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickee), and I look to you in Seine River. Madam Speaker, if you look, the member for Point Douglas today represents—[interjection] I am not stalling.

Madam Speaker: I would request that the honourable member for Inkster quickly summarize his prima facie case in defence of the honourable member for The Maples' (Mr. Kowalski) matter of privilege.

* (1400)

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, you set quite a challenge for me. When we think of contempt of the Chamber, let us not lose sight that the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickee) represents somewhere in the neighbourhood of 18,000, while you represent somewhere in the neighbourhood of 30,000. You know, these are the types of inequities, when we talk about the contempt of this Chamber; these are the types of issues that have to be dealt with. There is a responsibility for not only the government but also the official opposition. The public has had input between August 27 and September 11, seven different locations throughout the province on the proposed boundaries. There has been a

great deal of effort. That report was tabled on December 18 through Elections Manitoba.

I plead in particular to the opposition party. Given that we have a commitment from the government today that they will in fact bring in the legislation and we will not deal with the throne speech until that legislation passes, on behalf of the Liberal Party we would appeal to the New Democratic Party to do the right— [interjection] Well, he says it is political. If you want—do we want to pass it? The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) surrenders. Maybe I should take my note from that.

I know it is difficult. There is a need today. Today we have one party organizing on new boundaries; you have another party organizing on old boundaries. There is a need, and we need to recognize that need. The matter that the member for The Maples brings up— [interjection] I will wind up, Madam Speaker, and therefore the New Democrats will be able to address the issue. Hopefully it will be dealt with.

An Honourable Member: Have you read the report?

Mr. Lamoureux: Have you seen the bill? I have not seen the bill. [interjection] You are not going to pass the bill?

An Honourable Member: Are you going to vote against it?

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, this is the reason why—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. This is not a time for debate, and I had previously requested that the honourable member for Inkster quickly summarize his comments. I have been very, very flexible and allowed a considerable amount of latitude. I would ask that the honourable member conclude within the next 30 seconds, please.

Mr. Lamoureux: I will, in respect for the Chair, conclude by saying, Madam Speaker, if we look in Beauchesne's, in Citation 260, there is precedent. We would argue that it is imperative that this Legislature deal with the

boundary distribution issue prior to any sort of debate on the throne speech. It is in the best interests of not any political party; it is in the best interests of all Manitobans, and we appeal to every member to agree with that and agree to have that bill passed.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I did in my remarks ask if there was unanimous consent to proceed on the basis outlined. I know the Leader of the Opposition had indicated a willingness to give certainty and the opposition was not clear—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the matter raised by the honourable government House leader, procedurally I must deal with the matter of privilege raised by the honourable member for The Maples first. If indeed the honourable government House leader wishes to rise on House business, he may do so at a later opportunity.

On the matter of privilege raised by the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), I will indeed take the matter under advisement to consult with the authorities and report back to the Chamber.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I must inform the House that a vacancy exists in the representation in the Legislative Assembly of the electoral division of St. Boniface due to the death of Neil Gaudry, the member elected for this electoral division.

Also, I am tabling a copy of the notification to the Lieutenant Governor in Council of the vacancy thus created in the membership of the House.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections First Report

Mr. Peter Dyck (Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections):

Madam Speaker, I beg to present the First Report of the Committee on Privileges and Elections.

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections presents the following as its First Report.

Your committee met on Thursday, July 16, 1998, at 10 a.m., on Tuesday, September 15, 1998, at 1 p.m. and Wednesday, December 16, 1998, at 1 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building to consider the Report and Recommendations of the Judicial Compensation Committee.

At the July 16 meeting, your committee accepted the resignations of Honourable Mr. Radcliffe, Honourable Mrs. Mitchelson, Mr. Tweed, Ms. McGifford, Ms. Cerilli and Mr. Helwer, and elected Mr. Sveinson, Honourable Mr. McCrae, Mr. Laurendeau, Mr. Mackintosh, Mr. Gaudry and Honourable Mr. Stefanson to replace them. Your committee also elected Mr. Sveinson as its Vice-Chairperson.

At the September 15 meeting, your committee accepted the resignations of Honourable Mr. Reimer, Mr. Martindale, and Mr. Sale and elected Mr. Faurshou, Mr. Sale and Mr. Ashton to replace them.

At the December 16 meeting, your committee accepted the resignations of Mr. Helwer, Ms. McGifford, and Mr. Faurshou, and elected Honourable Mr. Gilleshammer, Mr. Mackintosh and Honourable Mr. McCrae to replace them. Later in the meeting, your committee accepted the resignation of Mr. Mackintosh and elected Ms. McGifford to replace him. Your committee also elected Mr. Rocan as its Vice-Chairperson.

At the July 16 meeting, your committee heard representation from Mr. Rob Tonn, representing the Provincial Judges Association.

Your committee agreed, at the July 16 meeting, to defer consideration of the Report and Recommendations of the Judicial Compensation

Committee until a future meeting of the committee.

At the December 16 meeting, your committee adopted the following motion:

MOTION:

THAT the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections accept the recommendations in Schedule A and recommend the same to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

THAT the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections not accept the recommendations in Schedule B for the reasons individually and collectively set out in Schedule B and recommend the same to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

SCHEDULE A

- 1. That effective April 1, 1997, salaries for Provincial Court Judges be increased to \$105,000 per annum (\$4,025.20 bi-weekly) and that effective April 1, 1998, salaries be further increased to \$112,000 per annum (\$4,293.45 bi-weekly).*
- 2. That effective April 1, 1997, salaries for Associate Chief Judges be increased to \$107,000 per annum (\$4,101.33 bi-weekly) and that effective April 1, 1998, salaries be further increased to \$115,000 per annum (\$4,408.00 bi-weekly).*
- 3. That effective April 1, 1997, the salary for the Chief Judge be increased to \$112,000 per annum (\$4,293.45 bi-weekly) and that effective April 1, 1998, that salary be further increased to \$122,000 per annum (\$4,676.98 bi-weekly).*
- 4. That the non-contributory supplementary pension benefit awarded to Judges as a result of the first Judicial Compensation Committee be paid only upon their retirement.*
- 5. That the benefits to which Judges are entitled be separately documented.*
- 6. That sick leave for Judges be limited to a maximum of 208 days.*
- 7. That any additional discretionary sick leave be eliminated.*

8. That the long term disability plan be changed such that the maximum benefit period allowable for Judges would provide continuation of benefits until attainment of age 65.

9. That the definition of total disability in the long term disability plan be changed to "the complete inability, as a result of accidental bodily injury or illness, to perform the regular duties of a Judge throughout the entire period of the disability."

10. That the life insurance plan be changed by eliminating the maximum of \$70,000 per multiple of coverage for Judges.

11. That the dental care service plan for Judges be amended such that the basis for payment for covered services shall be changed to reflect the Manitoba Dental Association Fee Guide in effect at the time of treatment.

12. That the basic portion of the dental care service plan be changed to include two oral examinations per year per eligible member and per eligible dependant.

13. That Judges be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in performing their duties and provided with the necessary tools to perform their duties in accordance with current policy.

14. That unless otherwise stated, all changes shall be effective on the date of approval by the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

SCHEDULE B

In reviewing the report of the Judicial Compensation Committee the Standing Committee has examined each of the recommendations individually and collectively. The Standing Committee has recommended approval of most of the recommendations of the Judicial Compensation Committee respecting compensation including salary increases and benefit improvements to the Long Term Disability Plan, the Group Life Insurance Plan and the Dental Plan. These improvements involve a significant increase in cost to Manitobans and a significant improvement in the total compensation of Judges relative to compensation improvements of other

Manitobans. The following recommendations of the Judicial Compensation Committee are not accepted.

1. The recommendation of the Judicial Compensation Committee that the supplementary pension benefit for Provincial Court Judges be extended to cover service prior to July 1, 1992 is not accepted for the following reasons:

(a) The current judicial pension plan consists of two parts. The first part is the same as the pension plan provided to government employees. It is equally funded by the Civil Service Superannuation Fund (CSSF) from employee contributions and the Government of Manitoba. Contributions occur at the rate of 5.1% up to the yearly maximum pensionable earnings (YMPE) and then at a rate of 7.0% on the balance. The accrual rate is 2.0% per year.

The second part is a supplemental plan which provides for an accrual rate, in combination with the CSSF, of 2.61% for all service as a Judge after July 1, 1992 for a maximum of 23.5 years. This enhanced pension benefit which was provided as a result of the first Judicial Compensation Committee was valued at an additional cost of 7.0% of payroll. The supplemental portion is paid entirely by government.

The Judges pension arrangements are significantly better than those of provincial employees and are currently among the most generous in Manitoba.

(b) The present value of the recommendation is estimated at \$2.0 million. The cost to implement such a recommendation given the other significant improvements in Judges compensation is unacceptably high.

(c) The second Judicial Compensation Committee recommended extension of the supplementary pension for service prior to July 1, 1992. That recommendation was rejected by the Standing Committee in November 1996.

The recommendation of the Judicial Compensation Committee to provide Judges with

improved pension credits for service prior to July 1, 1992 would effectively increase Judges' compensation for their services at that time.

This is not a period during which Judges' compensation was under review by this Committee.

(d) The Provincial Judges Association has indicated that because the average age of appointment is 43, Judges have insufficient time to accumulate a pension prior to retirement. The Judicial Compensation Committee stated that "there maybe Judges who are continuing to work ... solely because they cannot afford to retire."

These comments assume Judges have made inadequate personal pension arrangements prior to their appointment to the judiciary which is not a reasonable assumption. They also assume that Manitobans should be required to make up for the Judges' failure to make appropriate pension arrangements prior to their appointment to the judiciary by financing a retroactive improvement in Judges pensions.

(e) In extending the supplemental portion to Judges pensions for service prior to July 1, 1992, a specific group of Judges would be singled out for provision of a larger compensation increase by way of enhanced benefits compared to other Judges.

(f) Judges who accepted appointments to the bench prior to July 1, 1992 were aware of the pension arrangements when they were appointed. There have been no changes to the pension plan which would have negatively impacted Judges pensions subsequent to their appointment. The only changes which have been made to the pension plan have improved pensions.

(g) The recommendations of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections provide for significant increases in salary which will contribute to improved pensions in a prospective manner.

2. The recommendation of the Judicial Compensation Committee that government paid

parking be restored to the Judges as of July 1998 is not accepted for the following reasons:

(a) Judges have indicated that secure parking is essential due to the nature of their work. Secure parking has been provided. The issues of secure parking and free parking for Judges are not linked.

(b) All provincial employees, including Deputy Ministers, pay for their parking.

(c) All elected members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, including Ministers, pay for their parking.

(d) Judges have paid \$50 per month for parking since 1991. This is the same amount as that paid by provincial employees and elected members. For the downtown Winnipeg area, this is a very reasonable, if not low, monthly rate.

3. The recommendation of the Judicial Compensation Committee that the Provincial Judges Association be reimbursed by the government for the Association's costs of having submissions prepared and submitted to the Judicial Compensation Committee, by way of an allowance up to a maximum of \$15,000 is not accepted for the following reasons:

(a) The government interacts with a wide variety of other groups in a similar manner and does not pay the legal representation costs of these groups.

(b) The Government of Manitoba pays the costs of the Judicial Compensation Committee, including the costs of the Chairperson and the Manitoba Provincial Judges' Association appointee.

(c) The Judicial Compensation Committee is a fact-finding and recommending body. Legal representation and extensive briefs are not required. If the Association chooses to retain legal representation in this matter, it should be required to pay for that representation.

Your committee reports that it has considered the Report and Recommendations of the Judicial Compensation Committee.

Mr. Dyck: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on
Privileges and Elections
Second Report**

Mr. Dyck: Madam Speaker, I beg to present the Second Report of the Committee on Privileges and Elections.

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections presents the following as its Second Report.

Your committee met on Monday, October 5, 1998, at 1 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building, and on Thursday, November 26, 1998, at 1 p.m. and Monday, February 15, 1999, at 10 a.m. in Room 1023-405 Broadway to consider the selection and recruitment of the Children's Advocate. The Thursday, November 26, 1998, and Monday, February 15, 1999, meetings were held in camera.

At the October 5, 1998, meeting, your committee accepted the resignations of Honourable Mr. McCrae, Hon. Mr. Stefanson, Mr. Sveinson, Ms. Wowchuk and Mr. Ashton, and elected Mr. Helwer, Honourable Mrs. Mitchelson, Mrs. Driedger, Ms. McGifford and Mr. Martindale to replace them. Subsequently in the meeting, Mr. Mackintosh and Hon. Mrs. Mitchelson submitted their resignations, and Ms. Barrett and Mr. Rocan were elected to replace them.

Also at the October 5, 1998, meeting, your committee elected Mr. Helwer as its Vice-Chairperson.

At the February 15, 1999, meeting, your committee accepted the resignations of Hon. Mr. McCRAE, Mr. Rocan and Honourable Mr. Gilleshammer, and elected Honourable Mr. Praznik, Mr. Faurschou and Mr. Sveinson to replace them.

Also at the February 15, 1999, meeting, your committee elected Mr. Faurschou as its Vice-Chairperson.

At the October 5, 1998 meeting, your committee adopted the following motion:

THAT a Sub-Committee of the Privileges and Elections Committee consisting of Mr. Martindale, Mr. Laurendeau and Mr. Kowalski be struck to set the criteria and draft an advertisement for approval of this committee.

At the November 26, 1998, meeting, the sub-committee reported its findings to the Privileges and Elections committee regarding criteria and advertising. The report of the sub-committee was adopted. A second sub-committee, consisting of Mr. Laurendeau, Mr. Kowalski and Mr. Martindale was struck to conduct the screening and interview process, and to report back to the Privileges and Elections committee with a recommendation for the position of Children's Advocate.

At the February 15, 1999, meeting, the sub-committee reported that that it met in camera on Thursday, November 26, 1998, Thursday, January 21, 1999, Thursday, January 28, 1999 and Thursday, February 4, 1999 to discuss the timing of advertisements, and to conduct the screening and interview process. The Sub-Committee reported that one hundred and twenty five (125) applications were received for the position of Children's Advocate, and from these applications, interviews were held with five (5) candidates. Interviews were held on January 28, 1999. Following from the interviews, the Sub-Committee recommended the name of one candidate as the Children's Advocate.

Your committee has agreed to make its report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council with the recommendation that Janet Mirwaldt be appointed as the Children's Advocate for the Province of Manitoba.

Mr. Dyck: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Public Utilities
and Natural Resources
Third Report**

Mr. Peter Dyck (Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the Third Report of the Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources.

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources presents the following as its Third Report.

Your committee met on Tuesday, December 15, 1998, at 11 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building to consider the Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the fiscal year ended February 28, 1998.

Your committee accepted the resignations of Mr. Tweed and Mrs. Driedger as members of the committee, and elected Mr. Penner and Mr. Faurshou to replace them.

Mr. Jack Zacharias, president and chief executive officer, provided such information as was requested with respect to the annual report and business of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation.

Your committee has considered the Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ended February 28, 1998, and has adopted the same as presented.

Mr. Dyck: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Report of the 1998 Electoral Divisions Boundaries Commission. A copy of this report has been

distributed to each member of the Legislature previously.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon twenty-two Grades 7 to 9 students from Riverside School under the direction of Mr. Tom Wiebe. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson).

Also, fifteen Grades 9 to 12 students from Pierre Radisson Collegiate under the direction of Mr. Justin Degagne. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. Render).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you this afternoon.

* (1410)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Personal Care Homes
Government Commitment**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is to the First Minister. On page 16 of the Monnin report, former Justice Monnin states: I have never encountered as many liars in this inquiry in my years on the bench.

In 1995, this Premier promised to build 600 personal care homes, and he promised to build those homes in this fiscal year. I would like to ask the Premier: what has been the impact of this broken promise on the hundreds of Manitobans that regrettably this winter had to spend their time in Manitoba hallways because of the broken word of this Premier?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I presume that the member opposite—I thank him for the question—meant 600 personal care home beds, not 600 personal care homes. If that is indeed what he meant, the commitment that we made in running for re-election was to

build those beds over a period of time that we were in office, and we are in office. We are in the process of constructing those beds; they are under construction now. Contracts have been let.

Madam Speaker, the member opposite also knows that we had to deal with the reduction of transfers from Ottawa of an unprecedented nature of some \$263 million per year. Now the member opposite may not believe that that is a difficult thing to do, but this government wanted to remain—this government may want to remain within the mandate of a balanced budget. This government wanted to do so without raising taxes, and we were successfully able to do that. This government is also constructing them within this term of office, and they certainly are well underway, as people know. They have seen the sod turnings, they have seen the construction contracts let and they are watching the construction ongoing. Those personal care home beds will indeed help us as a province to meet the needs of our aging population and to ensure that we direct the resources of the province to the health care needs that are there today and in the future.

Mr. Doer: The Premier will know that the federal Liberal budget that cut the \$240 million out of Manitoba was introduced in the House of Commons in February 1995. The promise the Premier made was in March of 1995. The Premier said in March of '95, we will build them within this fiscal year and we will do so in spite of the federal cuts. So he never answered the question about his broken promise to the people of this province.

Madam Speaker, again in 1997 and 1998 the Premier promised that there would be massive improvements based on building of personal care homes by the middle of this year, which is seven weeks away. Now we find Tory—not Tory—public propaganda produced for the best interests of the Tory party that should be paid for by the Tory party, not by the taxpayers, again saying wait for 18 months for the personal care home beds to be made.

Now the Premier just said he would build it within his term, this existing term. Is the Premier saying the next election is 18 months

away, which is against the law again, or is he saying he broke his word in '95, or did he break his word in '98, or is he breaking his word again in this publicly paid pamphlet that has been put out to the people of Manitoba? When has he been telling the truth, and when is he breaking his word to the people of this province?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): First of all, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is wrong, as is often the case with what he brings to this House. I think it is important that he understands what is happening with personal care home beds in Manitoba. Since 1987-88, there are almost 1,200 new personal care home beds in our province. Granted, at this point in time, 300 of those are interim, and that is why right now the capital program for personal care homes in total in Manitoba is approximately 1,150. Of that there are going to be net new personal care home beds of about 660. The total capital program is \$140 million, and that is a significant commitment to providing the personal care home beds that are required here in Manitoba to help relieve some of the pressures that are on our hospitals and our acute care facilities. Those are the facts; those are the commitments. A number of those projects are currently under construction, and a number of those projects are in design and will be in construction very shortly.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Health, who was minister of the Treasury Board who closed 1,400 acute care beds—if he wants to talk about the facts, we would welcome the opportunity. This minister turned the sod in 1994 at the best Betel personal care home. His partner the Premier also announced in the 1995 election campaign that this would be part of the election promises for personal care home beds to be built in this fiscal year in Manitoba. I would like to know the impact of this broken promise on the number of patients that are today in the hallways of Grace Hospital. What has been the impact of your broken promise on the personal care homes beds, the 1,400 closures of acute care beds, on the patients that are today in the hallways in our community hospitals?

Mr. Stefanson: First of all, Madam Speaker, this government, this party agrees that having anybody in the hallway on any bed or stretcher is

something that is unacceptable, and that is why we are doing several things that are improving and will eliminate that. One of them is the commitment to over 660 new personal care home beds of which the money has been allocated in budgets. In terms of the specific project that the member for—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind all honourable members this is not the time for debate. This is question-and-answer period for which we have some specific guidelines.

The honourable Minister of Health, to complete his response.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the particular project that the member for Concordia referred to, the Betel project on Erin Street, is no longer being undertaken by the Betel organization, but there is a facility currently being built on that site, Calvary Place, which is now a hundred-bed personal care home project costing some \$11 million. So, again, a facility is being built on that site providing a hundred personal care home beds as part of the total commitment of over 660 new personal care home beds in the province of Manitoba.

Personal Care Homes Staffing

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my question also is to the Minister of Health. Earlier this day, I had occasion to meet and be with an organization that is being set up called Voices. I would like to table for the minister 10 recommendations this organization has made for improvements in care and in staffing levels at personal care homes in the province of Manitoba.

Given that we have had at least four inquests into deaths in personal care homes, given the Holiday Haven scandal, given the government report in 1995 that recommended changes, given the minister's commitment in '93 by member McCrae, by member Praznik that changes would take place, I am wondering if the minister will tell me whether the minister agrees with the

statement of his own Associate Deputy Minister Sue Hicks that staffing is not a problem in personal care homes and that the government is not going to increase staffing at personal care homes, which is the first recommendation of the group Voices for improvements in personal care homes.

* (1420)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I think the member for Kildonan is certainly well aware that the issue of standards in our personal care homes is currently being addressed. Those standards will be available shortly. They are going to be discussed with stakeholders in the system. Part of that review will also be the issue of funding for our personal care homes. Right now they are based on 1973 staffing guidelines. Having said that, we have continually increased the funding to personal care homes to meet the needs of the level of care in the personal care homes, but because the funding formula is tied to 1973 staffing guidelines, as part of our review going forward we are prepared to address that whole issue of the staffing guidelines and funding.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, will the minister outline for me whether or not this statement is like the same statement made by the former Minister of Health and the former former Minister of Health, who promised that these standards would be put in place more than six years ago, and we are still talking about reviewing these very standards that this minister, now the third one in a row, stands up and says they are going to be reviewed? Is the minister giving a guarantee that these standards and staffing increases will be put in place before the end of this session so that people will be assured that they will have proper care in personal care homes, and we will not have to bring these stories to the Legislature over and over and over again?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I am giving the member for Kildonan the guarantee that standards will be put in place. They will be available very shortly, and as I have indicated, I think it is incumbent on us, and I would think it would be something that he would support, that they be reviewed with the stakeholders in the

system. We will be undertaking that review, and after that we will be implementing and acting on the introduction of standards. They will be tied to the whole issue of the licensing facilities, and obviously there is ultimately a relationship back to the whole issue of funding. So the issues that the member for Kildonan is raising here today are going to be addressed very shortly.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, will the minister give a commitment today—albeit the former minister made the same commitment, the former former minister made the same commitment, and the associate deputy minister said there is no need to increase staff levels—to this Legislature, to the people who represent this group who have families in personal care homes, who feel hard done by, by this government, who have been protesting for six years, who have asked for changes, who have waited for changes for six years, that staff levels will increase in personal care homes in Manitoba and they will take place immediately?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, first of all, Madam Speaker, the funding relative to the staff requirements based on the level of care has continually been increased over the last several budgets. Having said that, I have indicated to the member for Kildonan that as part of the review going forward, we are prepared to look at the whole issue of funding and its relationship to the staffing guidelines which were set back in 1973. So, yes, that issue is going to be addressed as part of the package going forward in terms of the introduction of standards and the tying to the licensing, so I do not know what more I can tell him. Yes, the issue that he has raised here today is something that is serious and something that we will be addressing.

Election Tampering Premier's Involvement

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, when Judge Monnin referenced, and I quote, to never having encountered as many liars in one proceeding as he did in this inquiry, he was referring to the Filmon team, in an effort between 1995 and the time of the inquiry, to deliberately cover up what the judge also described as a clearly unethical and morally reprehensible scheme to split votes, and

particularly he referenced the fact that it involved aboriginal people.

Many Manitobans believe the Premier knew what happened. But we know one thing now, and it is documented in Question Period, that he knew as of June 23 that Taras Sokolyk, his chief of staff and campaign manager, was involved. He asked him to get a lawyer, told him not to come to staff meetings, but continuously in the Legislature in this province he denied that knowledge. I am wondering if the Premier will now admit that he indeed was involved with a cover-up that certainly began on June 23, continued throughout the session, continued on July 23 when a press conference was held in which he said he had not talked to Taras Sokolyk about this since 1995. Will he now admit that he was involved with a cover-up of this issue?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Thompson that he is bordering on being very close to asking questions on two matters that were taken yesterday under advisement by the Speaker related to matters of privilege. Traditionally in this House, questions are not asked on those matters until those matters have been brought back to the Chamber in the form of a ruling. Perhaps the honourable member would wish to rephrase your question very quickly. I would also remind the honourable member that our guidelines are that the individual posing the question has 30 seconds.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, my question—the matter of privilege yesterday dealt with deliberately misleading statements—was in regard to the fact it is clear that the Premier of this province was involved in a cover-up of what happened in 1995, and that cover-up certainly began in this House on June 23 and continued up to and including July 23 at a press conference and where Bonnie Staples-Lyon leaped to the defence of the Premier, a rather bizarre occurrence.

I want to ask the First Minister if he will confirm what the people of Manitoba know, and that is that he, himself, was part of a cover-up of the vote-splitting scheme.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, the member for Thompson earlier, in

getting up and speaking about the matter of privilege, talked about integrity in this House, and we see how little that term means to the member for Thompson in the manner which he puts forward.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Premier's comments are certainly unparliamentary, and I need no lectures from this Premier about integrity.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, among the requirements of all of us in a democratic process, and particularly in this House, is the acceptance of due process. I would remind the member opposite that the Monnin inquiry was struck with the urging of the members opposite, each and every one of them, with the widest possible terms of reference to get to the bottom of all of the issues. In this regard, I would say that the Monnin inquiry spent thousands of hours in listening to testimony and accepting evidence. I would say that it spent nine months in the deliberations that allowed it to arrive at conclusions, conclusions that the member opposite may not always accept in total. He chooses to selectively read from the Monnin report.

I would remind him of this: 72 people were interviewed by the inquiry, 37 of them appeared to testify under oath, of which I was one, and among the conclusions of Mr. Justice Monnin are, and I quote: Premier Gary Filmon testified that he was not aware of the plot or the cover-up, and I find his evidence to be credible.

That, Madam Speaker, is not just based on my evidence. That is based on interviewing 72

people, 37 of them under oath and none of them suggested otherwise—none of them.

* (1430)

So the member opposite can be whatever he chooses to be in this House, but he is not a person of integrity if he chooses to put forth information here for which he has absolutely no evidence and absolutely no proof. If he had, he could have gone before the inquiry under oath and provided that evidence. But instead of coming here and doing it in that fashion, Madam Speaker, I suggest to you that he demonstrates not only his lack of courage but perhaps his lack of integrity.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I am quoting the Premier from the House and from the inquiry. I want to ask the Premier, why, when he was aware on June 23, according to his own testimony at the inquiry, and he suspected Mr. Sokolyk was involved in the vote-rigging scandal, he did not say that to the House on the 23rd, 24th, 25th, throughout that session, why he did not say it on the 23rd of July when Mr. Sokolyk resigned, when he had Bonnie Staples-Lyon speak for him, and why it was not until October 15 when he was interviewed under oath by the investigators for the inquiry that he finally volunteered several months later that in fact he had talked to Mr. Sokolyk about that? Why will he not admit that if he had said the truth from the start it would have saved the province and the inquiry a heck of a lot of money? It would have salvaged what little credibility the First Minister had at that point in time.

Mr. Filmon: This is an issue that was covered extensively by the Monnin inquiry. In fact, the very questions that he is asking were asked by the legal counsel for his party, Mr. Myers, and also by the legal counsel for Darryl Sutherland, Mr. Walsh. As I said at that time under oath, and I talked about the 30-second exchange that I had with my chief of staff, Mr. Sokolyk, his first words were: the allegations are not true. So I did not have any knowledge or any sense or any belief that Mr. Sokolyk was a party to the scheme at that time. In fact even—he ended by saying: they are on to something, which only meant to me that he might have information about somebody else—somebody else. I have

gone through this with Mr. Monnin, and I say to you, Madam Speaker, that I have gone through it extensively. I spent six hours in cross-examination going through point by point by point. I said that I never believed until I saw a transcript of Mr. Sokolyk's submission to the inquiry that he had a personal involvement in the scheme. [interjection] I said get advice. That is what I said to him.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, you know the difficulty with all of this is that members opposite wanted to have the inquiry. The inquiry took place. It spent thousands of hours; it spent nine months; it asked all of the questions that the members opposite wanted. They are not satisfied with the outcome, and so they want to go here and make allegations without substance, without any substance. They want to go over and over and over and make allegations. That is why the people of this province have difficulty with the members opposite. That is why they have difficulty with them is that they are invited—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: I say to him, as I said to the Monnin inquiry—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister, to quickly complete his response.

Mr. Filmon: I say to him, as I said to the Monnin inquiry, that I never at any time until I received a copy of his testimony to the inquiry believed that Mr. Sokolyk was part of the scheme.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson, with his final supplementary.

Mr. Ashton: Final supplementary, Madam Speaker. I am wondering when the Premier will

acknowledge that, when Justice Monnin referenced in his report that a considerable amount of time, effort and money was expended by the commission in order to confirm what should have been freely admitted at the outset, one of the reasons this occurred was because the Premier himself, not under oath—it took for him to be under oath to reveal this meeting—in this House, where he was not under oath, will he not admit that he himself created much of this situation by refusing to divulge the fact that he had talked to Mr. Sokolyk about this and indeed had said get a lawyer and do not attend senior staff meetings?

Will the Premier admit that that in itself contributed to a cover-up, and if he had been forthcoming in June it would have saved the commission a lot of time? It would have salvaged what little credibility the Premier has in this province.

Mr. Filmon: One thing is clear, and that is that the only comment that was made in passing in the 30-second exchange was the allegations are not true, Madam Speaker, and that is the evidence that I had to go on. It is absolutely evident today that so much of this was hidden in records that had been removed, that in fact Mr. Monnin himself says that he had to go to the extent of getting a forensic auditor involved in order to get to the bottom of it all.

If he is suggesting that one conversation would have gotten to the bottom of this, he is absolutely wrong. Nothing short of the kind of full inquiry that we underwent would have gotten to the bottom of this because people did not tell the truth when they were asked directly, and so only through this inquiry, only through this complete and full investigation, were we able to get to the bottom of it, and as bad as it is, the fact of the matter is it had to be done that way, and those who have been involved have paid a very heavy price for it, as Mr. Monnin says.

Legislative Building Access

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert's Land): Madam Speaker, yesterday was indeed a dark day in Manitoba for First Nations people because again

they have been made to feel that they are not a part of this province. Those hundreds of First Nations people that were—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Rupertsland to pose his question, please.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, what I am talking about here is something very serious, something unprecedented in the province of Manitoba. We had a lot of people here who were trying to come and talk to and listen to the government on issues that they feel strongly about: poverty, housing, economic development and Third World conditions that aboriginal people live in in this province. The Winnipeg Police Service was called upon to prevent entry for these people of exercising their right to a peaceful protest. I would like to ask the Premier why the police, the riot police that numbered about 100, as I understand, were called instead of allowing people to come here, which is their right.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as the member may know—and I listened to the chief of police on the radio this morning indicating that they had picked up information to the effect that there was a protest being organized with potentially a thousand or more people at the building on that particular day. In the normal course of their responsibilities to ensure safety and security of the public and of people who use this building, either as guests or as employees, they took certain actions to ensure that people's safety and security could be assured. I accept that as their response, and I have no reason to question their manner in handling issues of this nature.

* (1440)

First Nations People Meeting with Premier

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Madam Speaker, there are several issues that I do not have the opportunity to raise with the First Minister, but I am quite sure that he is aware of

the many issues that aboriginal people have been trying to convey to the Province of Manitoba.

The AMC is meeting in Winnipeg this week, and I would like to ask the First Minister, given the fact that it was him who was invited to meet with the First Nations leaders in this province, if he will avail himself of that opportunity and meet with the chiefs of Manitoba this week in Winnipeg.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I just want to remind the member opposite that when he and some of his colleagues brought 500 or so people from Peguis to the building about two weeks ago not only the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Newman) met with them, but I met with them. At that time, I encouraged Chief Louis Stevenson to—[interjection] I offered, at that time to Chief Louis Stevenson to meet with him and his council to discuss specific proposals, to encourage them to put down ideas that we could implement for economic development. I said that we had some ideas that we would like to discuss. I have not heard back from him, even though the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs was at Peguis last Tuesday or Wednesday for the signing of an agreement on child welfare. He had an opportunity at that time, in fact, to speak with the chief and members of his council, and he took with him some economic development people who are involved in aboriginal economic development for the provincial government.

So we have always put ourselves available to those people, and we have suggested to them a time to meet this week. We have suggested that in order to be productive we need to have an agenda and we need to have an indication of what the topics are that they would like to discuss.

But we are quite prepared, I am quite prepared to meet with representatives and chiefs to ensure that we get down to work on some of these issues, Madam Speaker. It has never been our position that there are not things that could be done with co-operation and with all sides working toward the solutions.

Legislative Building Protest—Independent Public Inquiry

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertstland): I would like to assure the Premier that I had nothing to do with those people coming here a couple of weeks ago.

I had a very serious question, Madam Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Rupertstland, to pose his final supplementary question.

Mr. Robinson: My question will go back to the first one, Madam Speaker. Given the serious allegations of brutality and abuse, pepper spraying, et cetera, yesterday and not allowing people to enter their own building, I would like to ask the Premier—and there were injuries apparently sustained not only by aboriginal people, Indian people, but also building security staff, and that is not right, as well as elderly people who were here to visit and listen to the throne speech.

I would like to ask the Premier if he will instigate a full independent public inquiry to examine what happened here yesterday.

Hon. David Newman (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): Madam Speaker, the way the matter was conducted yesterday was, I think, of great credit, I would suggest, to the security staff and the police that were concerned. Peace was kept within the building, and the safety of the people who were here as invited guests was secure.

It is noteworthy, I think, that Chief Louis Stevenson led the demonstration two weeks ago, Tuesday, inside the Legislature, led it and instigated the charging of the door on the Legislature yesterday. He was followed by others, but he was the one that directed the invasion of the Legislature on both occasions, and I might say Clif Evans, the honourable member for the Interlake, arranged a meeting in the inside demonstration two weeks ago that led to the great numbers attending into the

Legislature. So it is very interesting how one can be used by these organizers of these events that are designed for the purpose of gaining attention and risking public safety. It is most unfortunate that the people were hurt, but the responsibility lies entirely on the shoulders of the organizers of that event.

Electoral Boundary Revision Legislation

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, the Monnin inquiry—[interjection]

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, thank you. The Monnin inquiry is indeed a very sad story. It is a sad story about the state of democracy in the province of Manitoba. Having said that, out of that story there are a number of recommendations that that report calls on the government to take action on. The government makes reference to it in its throne speech. The question that we have for the government, and particularly the Premier, is: when can we anticipate the government bringing forward that legislation, and is the government committed to passing that legislation prior to the next election?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, yesterday in the throne speech, I believe it was clearly indicated our intention to bring the legislation forward for this session of the Legislature and, again given our rules, members of the media, members of the House are very familiar. We introduce bills, there is lots of opportunity to see their passage either slowed or sped up by really the will of the opposition. We are certainly committed to its passage before a general election and, with co-operation of all members, that can be certainly achieved.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, given that, why will the government not then make a firm commitment and restore some of that faith in democracy in the province of Manitoba and guarantee that they will pass the legislation prior to going into the next election so that Manitobans will in fact have some faith that

these recommendations that the Monnin inquiry was all about are in fact going to be delivered to Manitobans?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, with all due respect to the member for Inkster, he and I entered this Chamber at the same time after the 1988 election. Governments have the ability to present legislation. It is not governments who guarantee passage; it is this Legislature. We can ensure that all efforts are made to see matters are debated and brought to concluding votes. If we introduce legislation, it is assumed, and always usually the case, that all government members will support it, but the real question is what happens during the course of debate. He and I have been here on many occasions where oppositions have decided that they did not want to see the passage of bills and have taken steps to delay their passage. I cannot prevent that from happening.

I would hope that in the case of both the boundaries legislation and these particular acts that there will be a willingness on the part of all opposition members to ensure that steps are taken to have speedy passage of this legislation, but if any opposition member wishes to choose to delay that passage, there are numerous rules available and tools available to delay passage of any bill, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Boundary Trails Health Centre

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Speaker, spring is in the air and the sounds of construction can be heard all around Manitoba. In the Pembina constituency we are hearing those sounds at the sight of the new Boundary Trails Health Centre.

Our government is committed to enhancing health care facilities. The Boundary Trails Health Centre is just one example of this. The project is a clear demonstration of our government's desire to provide Pembina region residents with quality health care and up-to-date diagnostic and treatment facilities. The \$34.9-

million, 94-bed acute care facility will be a welcome addition in my constituency.

The centre will serve the health care needs of Morden, Winkler, and surrounding municipalities. The two-storey building will feature state-of-the-art mechanical and electrical systems. The RHA plans to designate 40 beds for medical patient use, seven for obstetrics, 18 for surgery patients, four for special care needs, and 25 beds for rehabilitation assessment.

I know Pembina region residents will appreciate having ready access to the dialysis and chemotherapy units, state-of-the-art operating rooms, and the new CT scanning and diagnostic mammography units.

I would like to thank the Regional Health Authority-Central Manitoba Incorporated, the medical staff, and local volunteers for working so diligently with our government in order to create a first-class health care facility that will provide years of benefits for area residents. Thank you very much.

Personal Care Home Construction

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, the previous speaker, the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), prefaced his comments on his member's statement by saying the sounds of construction are ringing out in his constituency.

Well, I wish that the sounds of construction had rung out in my constituency in 1994 and 1995 or maybe 1996, 1997, or 1998, all those years, Madam Speaker, when the then Minister of Health, the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae), the current Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), who was then the Minister of Finance, the member Kirkfield Park, attended a groundbreaking ceremony for a hundred-bed personal care home in my constituency, the Betel Home. The minister who attended that ceremony said that the ground would be actually broken within months. The then Minister of Health in February of 1995 promised me that it was one of the top six priorities for capital construction for that fiscal year.

Madam Speaker, the Monnin inquiry says, and I quote: "In all my years on the Bench I

never encountered as many liars in one proceeding as I did during this inquiry.” That same statement, those same words, that same idea is being heard and spoken by my constituents in Wellington, who were promised by this government on three separate occasions a personal care home in their constituency.

The Speech from the Throne yesterday says our population is aging. Our population was aging six years ago, Madam Speaker. Where is the integrity of this government? The audacity of this government to now promise those personal care home beds when they promised them six years ago, Mr. Minister, the people of Manitoba hear and will understand, and they know what to do with this government the next time it has the guts to call an election.

Tergesen Family

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Tergesen family of Gimli as they mark 100 years of operation of the family store, H. P. Tergesen & Sons.

The store was built by Hans Pjetur Tergesen, who came to Canada from Iceland in 1887. When H. P. Tergesen opened this store in Gimli in 1899, it first sold food and other necessary household goods to the residents of this burgeoning community. The business was later passed on to his son Svenn Johann and is now owned by the grandson—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing great difficulty hearing the honourable member for Gimli make his member's statement.

Mr. Helwer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The business, as I said, was later passed on to his son, Svenn Johann, and is now owned by the grandson of Hans Pjetur, Terry Tergesen, and his wife, Lorna. The store is managed by their son, Stefan.

The Tergesen family has expanded and changed the business many times over the years, but they have also made an effort to preserve the past. On display in the store are the original

cash register and the coffee grinder, as well as other interesting antiques, and the old-fashioned showcase still continues to be used. These historic touches make the H. P. Tergesen & Sons store a unique tourist stop for visitors to Gimli and continues to generate interest in the town's history among the new generation of residents.

So it is pleasing to see that, even with the challenges that are constantly being created by today's fast-moving economy, there is still room for the family business. Our small-business owners have always played an important role in the prosperity of this province, and the continuing success of the store shows that they still have an important role to play in building Manitoba's economy for the future.

So, once again, my congratulations to the Tergesen family, and I hope they will enjoy another 100 years of success. Thank you.

Election Tampering

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Recently the media, expert commentators, disgruntled witnesses and even the Premier (Mr. Filmon) have provided Manitobans with their takes on the 1995 vote-rigging scandal. A decidedly closed Legislature has until now silenced the official opposition, but we now have the opportunity to speak.

Only the Premier knows that aboriginal people, who were yesterday shamefully and violently barred from the Legislature, will have a chance to be heard. Today I want to speak for people from Osborne where my constituents unequivocally agree with former Justice Monnin when he notes his findings of duplicity, arrogance, debasement and liars. Different from Monnin, however, my constituents see the Premier as one of the major liars. As one man told me, and I quote: I feel betrayed by a Premier whose government and conduct are reminiscent of Richard Nixon.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Osborne that we have some very definitive rules regarding unparliamentary language, and one of them is

not to address a member of this Legislature as "a liar." It has been called unparliamentary on several occasions, so I would ask the honourable member to pick and choose her words carefully.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am merely quoting the words of a constituent and reporting them back to the Legislature.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member that you are making explicit reference to a member of this Legislature, and it is deemed to be unparliamentary.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Osborne, to complete her member's statements.

Ms. McGifford: To continue with the remarks of my constituent who says: I feel this government with its nudge-nudge, wink-wink attitude to elections has insulted the intelligence of all Manitobans, taken us all as a pack of fools. He concludes by saying: I want an election right now, so I can speak my displeasure by voting Filmon out of office.

Then a woman who believes that the Premier does not tell the truth. She says she believes he definitely knew of the plot from the start and that his claim that he does not will cut no ice with the public. She adds, if he did not know, he must be running a half-baked operation characterized by deception and total disregard for the democratic process.

Madam Speaker, my personal favourite is one I have heard over and over again—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable member to summarize very quickly. The time has expired.

Ms. McGifford: To finish, my favourite: I voted Tory all my life, but I will never vote for Gary Filmon again. My fondest hope is that these people will soon have the opportunity to not vote for the Premier again.

* (1500)

Madam Speaker: Orders of the Day?

An Honourable Member: We are supposed to have three today.

Madam Speaker: Yes, you are, but there was nobody standing on their feet. I looked around. Who was—[interjection] Order, please. Today's rotation clearly states two government members, three opposition members. I indicated to the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) that the government had already had two members make members' statements. I paused and waited, looking at this side to see if they were indeed going to stand for your third member's statement. When no one stood, I then moved to Orders of the Day.

Now does the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) wish to make his member's statement? I am offering the honourable member for The Pas the opportunity to use the third statement from the opposition side. [interjection] I thank the honourable member.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (First Day of Debate)

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): I believe, Madam Speaker, we are moving on to the motion or address to His Excellency.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), that a humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows: We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been

pleased to address us at the opening of the present session.

Motion presented.

Mr. Laurendeau: Madam Speaker, I am honoured to move my government's throne speech on the occasion of the Fifth Session of the Thirty-Sixth Legislature and to address the honourable members, the people of Manitoba and the people of St. Norbert. It gives me a great sense of pride to relate the accomplishments of my constituency and this government and to talk about our future vision and direction.

Before I do this, though, I would like to pay tribute to our colleague and our friend, the late Neil Gaudry.

[French]

Neil était plus qu'un collègue. Il était un ami spécial. Il représentait ce qui est le mieux du système politique et de l'esprit humain. Il s'occupait, avant tout, des affaires de ses électeurs et électrices. Pour Neil, le travail qu'il a fait pour les gens de Saint-Boniface était plus important que son adhésion politique. Il était accueillant et chaleureux à chaque membre de l'Assemblée législative, et Neil était bien connu pour son affabilité et pour son humour.

Madame la présidente, Neil possédait un dévouement profond aux membres de sa circonscription et aux membres de la communauté francophone. Il promouvait et protégeait la culture franco-manitobaine par son affiliation avec le Festival du Voyageur et les Chevaliers de Colombe, où il était très actif. Neil était également fier de ses racines métisses, et il apportait à cette Chambre un sens d'histoire et de culture franco-manitobaine.

Chaque membre de cette Chambre peut faire honneur à la mémoire de Neil en se souvenant qu'on est tous ici pour servir les gens de nos circonscriptions et pour travailler avec un esprit de camaraderie.

[Translation]

Neil was more than a colleague, he was a special friend. He represented what is best in the

political system and in the human spirit. First and foremost, he looked after the concerns of his electors.

To Neil, the work that he did for the people of St. Boniface was more important than his political persuasion. He was welcoming and warm to every member of the Legislative Assembly. Neil was well known for his affability and for his humour. Madam Speaker, Neil had a profound devotion to the people of his constituency and to the members of the Francophone community. He promoted and protected Franco-Manitoban culture by his affiliation with the Festival du Voyageur and the Knights of Columbus where he was very active. Neil was also proud of his Metis roots, and he brought to this House a sense of Franco-Manitoban history and culture. Each member of this Chamber can honour Neil's memory by remembering that we are all here to serve the people of our constituencies by working in a spirit of good fellowship.

[English]

I thank Neil for all that he taught us and for all the fine qualities brought to this House. As both a friend and a legislator, he will be sadly missed. I thank Leona and the Gaudry family for sharing Neil with us.

Madam Speaker, at this time I would like to acknowledge the contributions made to the people of Manitoba by a few of my colleagues who have announced that they will not be seeking re-election.

The honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) has, since his election in 1977, been a strong voice for the people of southwestern Manitoba. In 21 years of public service, he has served his constituents with vigour and pride. Although he has served in a number of ministerial offices, it was his work as the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism and as the promoter of this beautiful province and its people that he helped nontraditional industries think of Manitoba as a place to do business. I want to thank him for his efforts in reshaping this province and securing a solid economic plan for my children and for their children. To the

honourable member, his wife Linda and their son Ryan, I extend my best wishes for the future.

The honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) is a man of considerable talent, and we will not see his likes again in this House. Madam Speaker, he will be missed. As many know, I share an office with the honourable member, and I do not think he will be replaced by anyone. He has been a strong representative to the citizens of Steinbach and his home community of Grunthal. As Minister of Highways and Transportation, Minister of Government Services and Minister of Natural Resources, he represented the interests of Manitobans forcefully at the provincial, national and international levels.

My best wishes for the future of the honourable member and his wife and his family. I must say on a very personal note that without this minister I would not have received a lot of the support that I did within my constituency, because we now have a bridge that probably should have been named the Albert Driedger infrastructure program.

The honourable member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay) has been a member of this Legislature since 1986 and during his time has been a strong voice for rural Manitobans, particularly the agricultural sector. Thanks to his effort, Manitoba now boasts a more diversified farm economy. During his tenure as Minister of Agriculture, he worked extremely hard for the agricultural sector to open new markets for made-in-Manitoba products. As Minister of Highways and Transportation, he positioned the transport industry to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. To Kay and his family, I extend my best wishes for a happy and healthy retirement.

The honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey) has also announced that she will not be running for office again. She has served the people of Fort Garry constituency very well, as well as the Department of Justice and the Department of Education. Madam Speaker, I had many events that I attended with the minister, and she has served not only her constituency but the departments that she worked in very well. I

wish her, Mitch, and the boys the very best in the future.

All the members whom I have just mentioned and to whom I have given thanks should take pride in the fact that they leave this province in a better shape than they inherited it. Through their service, they have played a key role in ensuring a solid foundation for Manitoba to enter the 21st Century. Thanks to them, we will move forward with pride and conviction.

Madam Speaker, in our replies to the Speech from the Throne, we are given a chance to look to the future whilst at the same time looking back and reflecting on the past. As I collected my thoughts for what I wanted to say in today's address, I remembered that at the commencement of the last session of the House that this province was just beginning to recover from the flood of the century. This event brought with it a great amount of hardship and devastation for the people of this province.

The people of St. Norbert worked together to prepare for the worst, and mercifully we were spared the destruction of our neighbours to the south. We continue to be thankful for the fact that no lives were lost in St. Norbert and that the damage done by the flood waters was repairable.

* (1510)

What will stay with me forever when I remember this time is the spirit demonstrated by the people of St. Norbert. As is often true of hardship, this event served to bring us closer together and rekindle a sense of community spirit and unity. I was deeply touched by the fellowship displayed by residents as they put aside their own concerns to help their friends and neighbours. No one in St. Norbert will ever forget the assistance we were given by members of our other communities and by the Canadian armed forces and by this government.

Madam Speaker, the flood waters have receded and life has moved on, but the community spirit demonstrated during the flood continues in St. Norbert. Today we continue to work together on projects and programs which enhance our neighbourhoods and bring people together. Through generous assistance of this

government and the various community grant programs, the people of St. Norbert have been able to stage a variety of programs and events which celebrate the multicultural nature of our constituency and of our province. These include events held by the Leong Yui Chinese Seniors Club, the Ghanian Union of Manitoba, the Association for Promotion of African Cultural Activities, and the Canadian Slovak League.

This government continues to recognize the significant role the St Norbert Arts & Cultural Centre contributes to the cultural life of Winnipeg and Manitoba through community supports and funds from the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. Restoration work was carried out on the Trappist Monastery guest house. This endeavour reinforces the historic roots of our community, promoting sustainable development and environmental awareness in all of Manitoba, and has been a pillar of this government's foundation in sponsoring programs such as the Outdoor Classroom developed by the St. Norbert immersion advisory council.

A number of young people have gained knowledge on the environment, which sustains us all. This government has shown a commitment to building sustainable communities.

Madam Speaker, the people of St. Norbert understand this and have worked with the government to see certain elements of our community enhanced. Be it in a grant for the expansion of the Richmond Kings Community Centre to maintain and renovate their existing structure or the installation of play structures by the Kirkbridge Park residents association and the Ryerson association of parents and teachers, we are demonstrating our commitment to assist local community leadership. These leaders support and enhance local projects which provide our children with healthy and productive activities.

Over the years, Madam Speaker, I have been actively involved in the St. Norbert Foundation. Many times life throws us a number of curves and some individuals attempt to find relief in drugs and alcohol. The abuse of these

substances can have a devastating effect on families and communities. When troubles like these occur, strong community support is required to assist those in need. The St. Norbert Foundation is a shining example of an agency who looks at the individual first.

I am proud of the fact that over the last year \$1 million was provided to the foundation in provincial support. With this funding, the foundation was able to establish a 20-bed residential treatment centre for people with solvent abuse problems. Ten beds have been provided for dependent children. The foundation informed me that their placement priority had been for pregnant women suffering from solvent abuse.

Madam Speaker, I am proud of this organization in my constituency. I will continue to be an advocate of the worthy programs carried out by the foundation. St. Norbert has also benefited enormously from the Urban Green Team initiatives undertaken in our community. I was proud to work alongside young Manitobans as they helped us clean up and do repairs after the flood. I think this program is a prime example of the innovative spirit of this government. The young people hired under the Green Team make invaluable contributions to our neighbourhoods while gaining work experience. I am very pleased that this government is continuing to support this initiative. We recently announced the \$1.85 million in provincial funding to run this year's Green Team projects.

St. Norbert and all communities in our province have benefited greatly by the involvement of this government and the variety of ways it extends a helping hand to all Manitobans. In creating strong communities, we ensure the health of the entire province. Yet looking past local commitments, I believe that the greatest contribution this government is making to the people of this province lies in the way it is preparing it for the future. This government is ensuring that Manitoba will meet with success when we enter the 21st Century. We are sitting on the cusp of the new millennium, and we are poised to embrace exciting opportunities.

In all government areas, Madam Speaker, we are looking to the future, and the plans we have outlined in our throne speech attest to this fact. These new initiatives will complement and enhance previous projects and programs we have introduced. We have introduced funding for computers and technology for the classroom. Last year \$5 million was given to the schools to help them maintain technological infrastructure. In today's world it is imperative that children know how to use information technology. It is becoming as fundamental as basic literacy itself.

Technology is all around our children. Recently, for instance, students from Manitoba and British Columbia took a virtual tour of the Leonardo Da Vinci exhibit in Victoria with the support of the department of training. Computers and related technology are giving our children all sorts of opportunities to expand their horizon and learn new things. I am proud to be part of a government which is allowing children to take advantage of this. We are affording them every chance to compete and succeed in today's world. Yet, while these new technologies open new borders and frontiers, they also represent new challenges.

I was very encouraged by my government's recognition of these challenges and the steps they are taking to protect our children from violent and sexual material disseminated on the Internet. NetSmarts, the program we have announced to educate parents about ways of blocking and monitoring Internet information, demonstrates the social responsibility which must always accompany progress.

Madam Speaker, our commitment to young Manitobans and their development can also be seen in our continued support to higher learning. This government realizes the importance of post-secondary education and training in the additional \$227 million in support to universities for capital and operating expenses. We have introduced the Manitoba learning tax credit and \$25-million bursary and scholarship matching fund for the post-secondary education. All of these initiatives encourage young Manitobans to continue their education and live up to their full potential.

In our Speech from the Throne, we have identified our continued commitment to post-

secondary education and training. We have voiced our intentions to increase accessibility to learning institutions and to ensure that the adequate teaching staff is available at these facilities. We also recognize the fact that education is a lifelong learning process, and we will make it easier for those already in the workforce to upgrade their skills and abilities. This reflects the realities of a changing and dynamic marketplace.

Madam Speaker, I can think of no better way to prepare this province for the challenges of the future than to invest in our young people. Our success in the future will be measured by the support we give them now. What we invest now will be rewarded in the years to come, and realizing that the future will be defined by a knowledge-based economy means that we must make a commitment to prepare young Manitobans for the new environment. We have voiced our intentions to give people the necessary skills to compete and succeed in knowledge-based industries. Manitoba has more knowledge-based jobs than almost anywhere else in the world, and we intend to build on that success. We will seek out partnerships to facilitate continued leadership in these areas.

This government is also adapting our health care system to meet future realities and future needs. In health care, like education, we are becoming increasingly reliant on innovative equipment. To accommodate these needs and the needs presented by demographic shifts in our population, we are repositioning our health care system. Indeed, we have achieved impressive results and will continue to spend in priority areas while making investments which will prepare the system for the future.

We continue to support innovation and research in health care. The government recently gave financial support to the St. Boniface Hospital to develop an agri-food research laboratory. This lab will be dedicated to the researching potential of human health benefits of agricultural products. In addition to the valuable research which will be carried out there, the lab will also employ 15 to 20 world-class researchers.

Madam Speaker, the Cangene Corporation unveiled plans in January 1999 for a \$15-million

health biotechnology research and development centre where 60 technology jobs are expected to be created. We were proud to offer support to this endeavour, and we are proud that leading-edge, world-class corporations like Cangene have chosen to make Manitoba their home.

The foresight and the vision of this government have also allowed us to modernize one of the cornerstone industries of this province. We have made tremendous improvements in agriculture, Madam Speaker. Moving away from our reliance on exporting raw staples, our commitments to diversification can be seen in the growth of nontraditional crops like pulses, peas, lentils and a variety of vegetables. Nontraditional livestock is now being introduced in increased numbers. This government has facilitated loans for those producers wishing to diversify their operations. This past year, we were pleased to offer support in the amount of \$60,000 to the Manitoba Crop Diversification Centre and have made a considerable investment in the Agri-Food Research and Development Initiative.

* (1520)

Madam Speaker, we are committed to value-added agriculture. If you head west on the Trans-Canada Highway, you will see a flour mill just outside of Elie, and, of course, the Isobord strawboard manufacturing plant, and this plant is making use of what would normally be waste products and turning it into a durable, usable material. This initiative has helped reduced the harmful practice of stubble-burning which sent smoke flowing into the city.

To further ensure future success in agriculture, the Monsanto crop research centre was recently announced for the University of Manitoba. This \$10-million crop development centre is a joint initiative which will create approximately 30 new technology jobs and inject an estimated \$12.5 million in spin-off revenues into the economy. This government is proud to be a partner of such cutting-edge projects, and, Madam Speaker, it also rebuilds one of our historic buildings at the university which makes me very proud, seeing it again be one of our pillars of sustainability at the university.

Madam Speaker, our government continues to aggressively meet the demands of change. We know that it is our role as government to protect and develop the interests of all Manitobans. Whether those needs are in the areas of health care, education or industry, we have been and will continue to be innovative. As we identify in the throne speech, we find ourselves at a strategic junction where we cannot rest on our past accomplishments but must aggressively pursue new opportunities. We must not become complacent. Many of the projects and announcements in which we have recently been involved bear testament to our commitment to seize these exciting new opportunities. We recently introduced a new website, for instance, which will give the world access to information regarding what is purchased and made and sold by the public and private sector in Manitoba. The Manitoba Marketplace, as it is known, will allow entrepreneurs in this province to expand their borders and gain exposures abroad, in Manitoba. Manitoba is becoming increasingly outward looking, and we know we have to promote ourselves and our capabilities to investors outside of our borders.

Madam Speaker, our country recently welcomed the addition of the newest territory Nunavut, and the territory of Nunavut offers our province new economic and trading opportunities, opportunities our government, along with 60 delegates representing various Manitoba businesses, recently travelled north to develop. Along with this trade mission, we have appointed a business liaison officer whose job it will be to provide better linkages between our province and Nunavut and the Northwest Territories and business communities, which I am sure will help my honourable colleague from Thompson because a lot of the initiatives will be forwarded from there.

We must seek out and develop new opportunities for ourselves. No one will do it for us. Along with new opportunities, we must enhance and build upon current efforts. That is why, Madam Speaker, through the Winnipeg Development Agreement, we will support the development of the mid-continental international trade corridor from Manitoba to Mexico. This funding will assist the development of a multijurisdictional plan to deploy an intelligent

transportation system that will reduce the cost of long-distance hauling and improve transportation safety.

One of the goals of our government has been the diversification of our economy. A diverse economy is the key to protecting Manitobans from the downswings in the global market. Our success in this area is clear, as witnessed by comments from the Toronto Dominion Quarterly Economic Forecast in March 1999 which said: Spurred by rising activity in its food processing and transportation equipment industries, Manitoba's economy will grow at a rate above the national average for the fifth year in a row in 1999. That was the Toronto Dominion quarterly report.

Madam Speaker, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce observation noted: What has been clear over the past year, however, has been the diversified nature of the Manitoba economy. By sector, some of the sharpest increases have been in transportation equipment, specifically airplane parts and buses.

Our province has become a leader in Canada in an increasing number of areas. We have the largest centre of bus manufacturing in North America, the largest life insurance company, the largest furniture manufacturer, the largest ladies wear and ladies outerwear manufacturer, the largest mutual fund company, the largest potato processing operation, the largest call centre, the largest wood frame window manufacturer. I know this one always makes my colleague from Brandon West smile: Manitoba will soon be home to the largest pork processing plant in Canada.

Our diversified and strengthening economy has resulted in Manitoba having the lowest unemployment rate of all provinces. It is also the lowest unemployment rate Manitoba has seen in almost 20 years. At the end of 1998, our youth unemployment rate was four percent below the national average. Our exports exceeded \$7 billion, up considerably from 10 years ago.

The employment opportunities in this province are garnering widespread praise. Madam Speaker, author Nuala Beck was

recently in Winnipeg attending the Manitoba and the World Millennium Conference. There she was quoted as saying: You are doing something awfully right. This province ranks above Singapore in its knowledge base. This province ranks second in the world only to The Netherlands. Ms. Beck noted that this province has more knowledge-based jobs than almost anywhere in the world. I cannot tell you how incredibly proud it makes me feel to hear that.

Through our hard work we are ensuring jobs and futures for our children at home in Manitoba. Our youth and indeed an increasing number of Manitobans have been able to find rewarding employment opportunities within their own province, employment that demands a high level of skills and knowledge. Just the other day I picked up The Globe and Mail where an entire section was devoted to the Manitoba success stories. I will read a direct quote from the paper: Winnipeg and the province have done an excellent job in building a diverse economy.

Other Manitoba communities such as Altona, Steinbach, Portage la Prairie, and Brandon were similarly praised for their abilities to attract new business and foster growth.

We are increasingly branching out into nontraditional industries, the film industry, telecommunication information technologies, and software development are all growing rapidly. This government realizes that we must continue to diversify and innovate to progress.

I have lived in Manitoba all my life, Madam Speaker, but I have never been as proud to call this province my home as I am today. In so many ways we are continuing to grow and change, yet while we go forth we will continue to be mindful of where we have been and of traditions and customs of which we have built our history.

In my government's Speech from the Throne we have indicated our intentions to institute an elected Speakership. We respect our legislative traditions, but we recognize that we must adapt them to current realities. I commend the Premier for undertaking this positive legislative reform.

[French]

Je suis fier de notre dévouement aux gens de cette province. Nous continuerons à travailler pour créer un environnement où chaque Manitobain et Manitobaine peut réussir. Le gouvernement a la responsabilité d'avancer sa population, et j'ai confiance que ce gouvernement peut le faire.

[Translation]

I am proud of our devotion to the people of this province. We will continue to work to create an environment where every Manitoban can succeed. The government has the responsibility of furthering the interests of its population, and I am confident that this government can do so. We are a forward-looking government, and progress is the foundation on which we will build success.

[English]

I recently attended a dinner at the Grenadian Association of Canada, and some of the members of the opposition were there, as well as a Liberal. I forgot which one it was. It was Dr. Gerrard, I think. I would like to impart on you and on my honourable colleagues some of the lines from their national anthem. These words embody a sense of reverence for the past and anticipation for the future: Ever conscious of God, being proud of our heritage, may we with faith and courage aspire, build, advance as one people, one family. God bless our nation.

May we, the representatives of this province's people, let this philosophy guide us. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to address the members of the House, the people of the province, and the people of Charleswood in response to our government's Speech from the Throne.

This is the first time I have had the opportunity to speak in response to the throne speech, and I am honoured to rise in the House on the opening of the Fifth Session of the Thirty-Sixth Legislature. I embrace the opportunity I

have been afforded to discuss all the tremendous accomplishments of this government and to discuss where our strong and competent leadership will take us in the future.

I would like to welcome all of the honourable members back to the House. I am sure that they look forward to presenting their constituents' interests within the Legislative Assembly. Over the past few months we all had the opportunity to work hard in our constituencies, visiting and consulting with our constituents, collecting their valuable input into priorities for their communities.

* (1530)

In addition to welcoming back members of the Legislative Assembly, I would also like to extend a sincere welcome to our new pages. I know their services will be much appreciated by us all. These positions provide a wonderful opportunity for these young people to witness first-hand the business of this Chamber. I hope this experience leads to a lifelong interest in the legislative process.

Before I commence speaking about matters and accomplishments of government, I would like to take a few moments to pay tribute to the late Neil Gaudry, a wonderful colleague whose untimely passing in February has left a palpable void in this Chamber. Mr. Gaudry was an exemplary legislator who worked diligently for the people of St. Boniface. He was often seen walking the halls on his way to a minister's office to talk face to face about a constituent's concern. Neil was well known for his kind nature and for his approachability.

In addition to the fine qualities he brought to this House, Mr. Gaudry will long be remembered for his dedication to the Francophone community. He was actively involved in the Knights of Columbus and the Festival du Voyageur, where he spent countless hours enjoying and promoting Francophone culture. Mr. Gaudry brought a strong Francophone presence to the Legislative Assembly which reinforced our pride in the history of this province.

Neil Gaudry was a popular and well-respected member of this House who realized

that politics is not about partisanship. It is about the people we serve.

One of Neil's legacies will be his exceptional record of public service to the people of his community. I know that in my role as an MLA I endeavour to show the same level of commitment to my constituents that Neil Gaudry demonstrated to his. The people of St. Boniface and the people of Manitoba have suffered a great loss and he will be missed.

Madam Speaker, Neil Gaudry has been an inspiration to me for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the initiative he took in addressing community issues and working for the people of his constituency.

I see that same spirit lives on in the people of my constituency, and I would like now to highlight that spirit. Since my election as the MLA for Charleswood, I have been tremendously impressed by the enthusiasm and community spirit shown by the people in my constituency. They have shown a willingness, in fact an eagerness to work together on projects to enhance our neighbourhoods. The most meaningful and significant change is the change we effect ourselves, and the people in Charleswood truly exemplify this. I strongly believe that the most vibrant communities are those which strengthen themselves with the participation of local residents.

In my tenure thus far as the MLA for Charleswood, I have worked in co-operation with dedicated local citizens to introduce or participate in programs and activities for youth, families and seniors. Recently I held a community leaders' luncheon to bring together different leaders in Charleswood to discuss future opportunities for strengthening our constituency. The turnout was truly inspiring, and we have agreed to meet on a quarterly basis to promote community involvement in enhancing the quality of life in Charleswood. It was very encouraging to see people with a genuine interest in their community gathered together to make plans for the future.

I am also encouraged when I see that with the support of our government the Winnipeg Police Service has opened police athletic centres

at Westdale Junior High and Charleswood Junior High. These centres run sports activities for youth during the evening. They have been very well received with Westdale Junior High reporting a nightly attendance rate of 80 young people. I simply cannot say enough about this tremendous initiative; however, it is not the only project that has been introduced for youth in Charleswood.

Varsity View Sportsplex ran a successful summer drop-in program for area youth with the assistance of funding from the Urban Green Team. The Urban Green Team is also engaged in several other community projects which not only enhance the appearance of our neighbourhood but gave young people valuable work experience. We have started a youth advisory group where several young people in the constituency meet with me to voice their concerns and issues while articulating their own ideas about what they would like to see take place in the constituency. I am supportive of the Youth Community Partnerships project, which provides a positive alternative to unhealthy lifestyles and increases community services for youth by operating a drop-in centre largely coordinated by the youth themselves. The organization also presents a short but powerful drama to community groups about the effects of drug and alcohol abuse.

The Westdale Residents Association was formed in July 1998 with a major goal of ensuring community safety. Following formation, a Citizens on Patrol grant was then received through the Justice department. Madam Speaker, this group serves as an excellent example of community empowerment. Comments from community police indicate that there has been a drop in crime statistics since the residents association has started its patrols. The Westdale Residents Association is an excellent example of how effective the Take Back the Streets initiative announced in yesterday's throne speech, could be. This initiative will empower communities to lead the way in finding solutions to local problems just as we are seeing now in Charleswood.

Ensuring that seniors in the constituency are informed and aware of options and activities is another community priority. Late last year I set

up the Charleswood Senior Advisory Committee, which, amongst other things, now publishes a newsletter outlining resources and activities available for seniors in the constituency. These dynamic, community-minded citizens are currently exploring the possibility of opening a drop-in centre in the neighbourhood.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to tell my colleagues about all the wonderful things that are being done in Charleswood. It is too easy to sit back and complain about what is not happening in our neighbourhoods. The people in my constituency are taking charge and making things happen. This impressive list of accomplishments would have been impossible to achieve were it not for the concerted efforts of community volunteers, yet I would be remiss not to mention the community mindedness of this government. They, too, are making things happen.

Since this government came to power, a wealth of programs have been ushered in which facilitate community projects, whether they be for local activities and infrastructure or related to broader areas of Family Services, Justice and Health. All of these elements are important in contributing to strong individuals, strong communities and ultimately a strong Manitoba. We are at a strategic junction as a province, Madam Speaker. While our successes have been impressive over the last decade, if we allow ourselves to become complacent, we risk losing it all. The people of Charleswood almost a year ago had the opportunity to voice their opinion on which road to go down. They strongly supported the vision of this government and the plan that this government has laid out for the people of Manitoba.

All segments of our communities need to know that their well-being and development are valued and that the government is willing to make a meaningful and substantial investment in them. As a mother and a nurse, I regard education, justice, health care and programs for children as areas of utmost importance. I am proud to be part of a competent and responsible government which shares these commitments and which has worked hard to develop effective programs in these areas.

I feel confident, Madam Speaker, that this government is working to ensure the best possible education system for my children and for all young Manitobans. This government has made Education and Training its second highest funding priority, second only to health care. There is no greater social equalizer than a high quality public education system. It is our duty as government to do everything we can to make that available to all Manitobans. Our children deserve every opportunity to succeed, and our commitment to them is strong. We have a plan. We have provided an additional \$2 million in this last fiscal year for early literacy intervention to help ensure that children know the fundamentals of reading and writing, so that they will meet with success in their school careers.

* (1540)

Standards testing has been introduced to evaluate individual student performance. Teachers, students and parents not only have a right to monitor performance, they need to have this information. We are committed to involving parents in the education of their children, and they need to know how their children are doing. New curriculum is being developed to prepare students for the 21st Century. We have provided funding for computers and technology in the classroom, Madam Speaker, because in addition to giving students a solid grounding in the fundamentals of learning, we must also equip them with the special needs needed in today's world.

We have maintained our commitment to post-secondary education and apprenticeship programs with a funding commitment of \$227 million to universities for operating and capital amounts. Including the Manitoba Learning Tax Credit, the budget for student financial assistance and the Access program amounts to \$34.3 million. Manitoba is the only province which offers a rebate like the Learning Tax Credit to university students.

To further support post-secondary education, this government announced a scholarship and bursary matching fund which will match dollar for dollar contributions made by private donors and corporations. Our contribution to this initiative is \$25 million over

five years. This not only demonstrates our commitment to higher learning, it also encourages various sectors to take an interest in the development of young Manitobans. Madam Speaker, this government realizes the long-term benefits accrued by every member of this province when we make an investment in our children's education. Knowledge is power, and we want to afford our children every opportunity to empower themselves.

Justice is yet another area where this government has taken charge and made positive results occur. This is an area where Manitobans wanted to see change, and we have obliged them, Madam Speaker. Here the philosophy of the government recognizes the vital role community residents play in the larger system. We encourage partnerships between communities, police, other levels of government and local businesses. The Citizens on Patrol program is an excellent example of how we have given community residents power to take control in their own neighbourhoods. We have also supported preventative and intervention programs for youth such as the Urban Sports Camp and Ganawenimig.

In addition to community-based initiatives, though, we have shown our concern for the safety of Manitobans with our commitment to get tough on crime. We have opposed bail for violent offenders and cracked down on gang membership and gang activity. Criminals are in jail where they belong and not on the streets where they continue to offend. Manitobans have a right to know that their government is committed to protecting the safety of their families and their communities. We will not bow down to criminals.

In addition to dealing with offenders, we are committed to showing fairness and compassion to the victims of crime. A victims rights act has been introduced which amongst other things gives an avenue of appeal to victims who feel they have been mistreated by the system. The act also provides victims with information and resources. Our initiatives in the area of justice reinforce our commitment to the safety and well-being of families. We are proud of our strict antidrinking-and-driving laws, amongst the toughest in Canada, which send the message that

those who stand to harm our loved ones with their recklessness will be severely punished.

Improvements to programs have been made and additional services have been introduced for victims of domestic violence. For instance, Manitoba was the first province to provide women at risk of being abused with preprogrammed cell phones which connect them to emergency services. Additional support and information have been made available for women who have suffered abuse.

This government is also tackling social problems like prostitution. Recently, we introduced legislation which allows johns' vehicles to be seized. I am currently involved, Madam Speaker, on a committee which is developing a co-ordinated strategy to combat child prostitution. Child prostitution is child abuse, and this government will not tolerate sexual exploitation or victimization of children.

Madam Speaker, as every mother should know, children come first. Our initiatives in both Justice and Education demonstrate our resolution to provide for the well-being of young people, but it must go further. This government has made support for children one of our most cherished priorities. As an indication of its commitment to the welfare and development of children, my government established the Children and Youth Secretariat in 1994. The development of this multidepartmental agency represents a commitment to improve the co-ordination of services for high-risk children and youth. The programs they have introduced comprise a long-term strategy to enhance the quality of life of our children. The programs being implemented are helping parents raise children to become healthy and productive adults. BabyFirst works with parents to promote positive parenting and to provide supports for at-risk families and prevent abuse and neglect of children. This initiative was based on a Hawaiian model, which showed a 90 percent success rate over the long term.

In 1998, we were proud to announce funding for the Stop FAS program, a program to help avert fetal alcohol syndrome, a devastating and completely avoidable birth defect. The Women and Infant Nutrition program works to ensure

that pregnant women's and young children's dietary requirements are met during the crucial stages of a child's development. This government knows that children and pregnant mothers need proper nutrition. For every dollar spent on prenatal nutrition programs, there is a potential \$8 savings in future health care costs.

As a mother and a member of government, I want to ensure that young Manitobans are given the support they need so that they can develop into healthy and productive members of our communities. The EarlyStart program introduced by this government works with children age two to five and their families to provide child development activities and outreach to parents. This occurs before children begin school and is another strong example of our preventative strategy in child development.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I would point to this government's successful efforts in regard to welfare reform which improves the quality of life of children and their parents both now and in the future. Since reforms to welfare have been introduced, over 10,000 Manitobans have gained independence from social assistance. People are being given the help they need to enter the workforce, provide for their own families, and gain greater control over their own lives. As the proverb states: When you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.

Madam Speaker, all of these examples I have mentioned point to the strong plan and vision of this government. The best way to foster healthy citizens is to give children a strong foundation and to equip them with the ability to make forthright choices and to provide them with the skills they need to succeed in the future. This government has identified some of the biggest issues and concerns regarding children and has created feasible strategies to address these areas. Besides creating the fiscal environment where families can prosper, this government deserves praise for its proactive approach to family issues. We know that it is best to identify long-term approaches and devise workable solutions. Blindly throwing money at a problem and hoping for the best is both wasteful and inefficient.

Perhaps no other area best exemplifies this government's long-term plan and vision and its commitment to the people of this province than our performance in health care. As a nurse, I am proud to be part of formulating solutions and ensuring the long-term viability of the system. I care deeply about protecting our health care system, and I care deeply about the people it serves.

This government recognized that health care in Canada is at a crossroads. If we are to continue to provide excellent care at an affordable cost, the realities of an aging population force us to make difficult decisions. The system must change. The aging of the baby boomers is the most critical reality facing us as we approach the millennium. The only way to maintain universality is to perform major reconstructive surgery on the system. This means implementing reforms that are bound to meet resistance from those who feel they have a stake in health care as it is currently organized. It will take public pressure and courageous government action to override this resistance and achieve the necessary change. This government has that courage, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba is moving ahead with a plan to meet these changing needs. Our plan will ensure that high-quality services will be there when they are needed today and in the future. As a nurse, I am proud to see my government commit to presenting updated legislation to recognize the role that health professionals play in today's system, and it will include enhanced public representation on governing bodies and committees. I spoke of this earlier, Madam Speaker, and it reflects our commitment to getting people involved in the solutions. Health care is a concern across the country, but I believe here in Manitoba we go about things a little differently—we get involved. I also believe Manitobans are a compassionate people. That is why I am proud to be part of a compassionate government that reflects those values. A government that recognizes the true purpose of putting our economic house in order is to allow us to tackle the complex challenge of reforming health care.

* (1550)

The Speech from the Throne stated: "Health is my government's top spending priority." Well, it is mine, too, Madam Speaker. That is why I am so proud of my government's record and vision for the future. We have reduced waiting lists by expanding high-demand services with new equipment funding. We are relieving overcrowding by adding more personal care home beds. We have implemented new approaches to emergency care. We have been achieving positive results in all areas of health care, and it is because we have a plan. Recent reports, for instance, indicate that waiting lists for CT scans at St. Boniface General Hospital and Health Sciences Centre have been reduced to four to six weeks from 16 to 20 weeks. Waiting lists for bone density scans have gone from two years in 1997 to under four weeks. In spite of the impressive results we have already achieved, we will continue to reduce waiting lists.

Madam Speaker, 5,000 MRI procedures were carried out last year, and over 8,000 are expected to be performed this year. We have introduced two mobile mammography units to our Breast Screening program. Thirty-three thousand women are expected to be screened in 1999. Fifteen thousand more dialysis treatments will be performed this year, and more than 620 personal care home beds are being added to provide better accommodations for those needing long-term care. These beds represent part of a logical and necessary plan which ensures that hospital beds are reserved for the acutely ill.

Further to this end, we have almost tripled our spending on home care in the last 10 years. This ensures more appropriate care for segments of our population and allows hospital beds to become available for those who need them the most. We are also providing as many services as possible within the community. In addition to home care, we have introduced supportive housing and companion care, two innovative approaches for community care which will allow more of our elderly or chronically ill to maintain their independence while receiving quality care. To ensure there is suitable and adequate care in the community and in our health care institutions, this government has active and aggressive strategies in place to recruit and

retain nurses and doctors and to attract medical professionals to rural and northern Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, all of these components are part of a comprehensive plan to ensure that our health care system is equipped to move into the next millennium. We are at a juncture in our province's development where we are dealing with the challenges and opportunities presented by an aging population and an increased reliance on costly state-of-the-art medical technology. We are committed to rising to the occasion and meeting this challenge. We are adapting our system so that it will be able to meet future demands.

Our promise to usher the health care system into the future does not end with the impressive accomplishments I have cited. We will continue to strive for excellence by enhancing accountability in the system and rewarding efficiency. This government will work for greater transparency and to establish firm health care standards. The central role of the patient in the health care system will become our renewed focus.

We will continue to spend wisely in areas deemed to be priority. However, this commitment to fiscal responsibility does not mean that we are compromising patient care. This government has imperatives which extend beyond the bottom line. We spend almost \$2 billion annually on health care, which represents almost 35 percent of the province's yearly budget. This fact, coupled with our well-devised plan, proves that this government values and cherishes high-quality health care. I know that this government is the only one with the ability to manage the system to future success. We have begun to succeed, and we will continue to succeed.

I am especially proud of all that this government has accomplished in health care in spite of the obstacles which have been laid in our path. Madam Speaker, the public health care system was an agreement into which the provinces entered into equal partnership with the federal government. Yet in the last five years the federal government has reduced transfer payments by \$260 million annually. Earlier this year, I was proud to spearhead along with my

colleague the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) a petition campaign where almost 20,000 Manitobans demanded the federal government restore funding to health care. This government is keeping its health care promises, and we demand that Ottawa do the same. We have continued to inject money into the system while the federal government has retreated from its commitment.

We have also been challenged by members opposite. Their vehement criticism stems not from the fact that they have a plan or a vision for health care but from the fact that we do. Instead of presenting the public with options, they present negativity and cynicism. Yet they try to persuade the people of this province that they can do better than we do.

I would like to read some headlines which highlight their accomplishments in health care when they were at the helm: Heart surgery rate worries doctors. Health crisis cited. Experts warn of second-rate health care. Bed shortage cited in death of four patients. People going blind waiting for eye surgery. Aging medical equipment worries MDs and technicians. Hospital forced to limit admissions.

Madam Speaker, I worked in the hospital system under these conditions, and I recall it vividly. It was horrendous. I shudder to recall those days.

What the members opposite offer is rhetoric. What we offer is leadership and long-term vision, leadership and vision in health, family services, justice, education, industry, and economic development. This government is achieving great things in all these areas. Under the leadership of this government, we have moved this province out of the dark days when all we would see was despair. We have gone from being a province burdened by spiralling debt, high unemployment, and low investment to one of the greatest success stories in the country.

Manitoba is a dynamic presence on the national and international scene. We have struck a responsible balance between economic management and human investment. This government has adhered to its vision and commitment and reconstructed Manitoba into a

province we are proud to call home. This province is now prepared to consider whatever legislative changes are required to give the city the tools it needs to get on with the task of lowering overall taxation levels. We are fully committed to support Winnipeg's new mayor and council to deal with this issue and others, which will enhance the quality of life in this city.

I look with tremendous anticipation to the future, for I know we will continue to achieve great things.

Madam Speaker, the Speech from the Throne provides us with a forum in which to discuss our vision and aspirations for the future but also to remember all that we have achieved in the past. Our achievements have been made possible by the good will and hard work of Manitobans as well as the leadership and direction of members of this government.

I would now like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to four members of my caucus who will be retiring from politics this year. They have all made enormous contributions to the political landscape in this province and have left formidable legacies within their respective constituencies. All four have dedicated themselves wholeheartedly to achieving great things for this province.

Madam Speaker, the honourable member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay) was first elected in 1988 and since that time served the government as Minister of Agriculture and minister responsible for telecommunications. Most recently he served as Minister of Highways and Transportation. The people of Springfield constituency have been extremely well served by the honourable member. He has been a very active member within caucus and within his community. His hard work has brought improvements to the constituency of Springfield and helped strengthen the province as a whole.

* (1600)

The honourable member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) was first elected in 1990 and has very capably represented this community both in her capacity as an MLA and as the minister of various portfolios, most recently as Minister of

Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. She has been a role model for women in politics noticeably as the first female Justice minister in Manitoba and has gained the respect of various artistic and cultural groups for all projects and endeavours that she has helped realize in her current role.

The honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) first entered the political scene in 1977, and in his 22 years in politics he has proved to be a tireless worker for the people of his riding. Much of his tenure in government was spent in cabinet where he served as Minister of Natural Resources, Government Services and Highways and Transportation. His colleagues will miss his frank, straightforward and hands-on approach, as well as the breadth and depth of knowledge he brought to caucus.

Finally, there is the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey). He is one of the longest-standing members of government, having first been elected in 1977. The honourable member has held a variety of cabinet posts and was invaluable in his role as Deputy Premier. In addition to being a supportive colleague, he is truly a leader and a team player and a great believer in this wonderful province of ours. He cares deeply about his own constituents in Arthur-Virden but is equally concerned with the success and prosperity of all Manitobans.

I wish all of the honourable members much luck and success as they begin the next chapter of their lives. Thank you all for everything you have done for your constituencies, for this government and for all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, in the throne speech this government has laid out a stable path on which we will travel forward. We are maintaining our commitment to Manitobans as individuals, as members of communities and as members of this province. Strong individuals build strong communities which build a strong province. We are committed to providing the foundation on which all three can be built. We must continue to build upon and strengthen what is working and have the courage and commitment to change what is not. Manitoba must make a choice, a choice between confronting the new challenges that are emerging as we approach the

millennium with policies that will move us forward or denying those problems and slipping into a spiral of decline.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to serving the people of Charleswood and all Manitobans as we move forward with a new agenda for a new millennium. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I want to begin my comments today by wishing our former Sergeant-at-Arms well in his retirement and welcome our new Sergeant-at-Arms. Certainly I thought it interesting—in fact, I have found it very interesting over the years having the chance to talk to people who serve in this Chamber and their unique perspective on what happens, and I will be looking forward to similar sorts of discussions, I am sure, once our new Sergeant-at-Arms has had the opportunity to see the Legislature up close.

I can indicate, by the way, I expect this to be a very interesting session. It may be a session judged more in terms of days rather than months. We certainly in the opposition hope so because, quite frankly, whenever this government has the courage to call an election it could not be soon enough for us and a lot of people in Manitoba. That being the case and recognizing indeed that there will be a number of members that will not be running again, and I do not want to go extensively into talking about this because then again we could be in session for quite a while. So, to sort of paraphrase Mark Twain, the references to the political passage of various people may be a little bit premature here, but I certainly notice that there are going to be some significant losses to the House, certainly with the member for The Maples not running, certainly a significant loss. To members opposite, once again I do not want to be premature on this because there may be other members not running.

I realize it is a very difficult personal choice, and it is one I know I make every time in consultation first and foremost with my family. I respect those that make the most difficult decision in politics. It is very easy to decide to run. It is very difficult when you have run and you have been elected a number of times to decide that perhaps it is time to move on, and I

certainly wish very well the members present right now who are going to be in that situation, the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey), the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay). I have got to be careful here too because I was talking to the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) yesterday. Of course, it has been announced that he is not running, but it was news apparently to the member for Lakeside. So I am only going on the basis of what I know of people, and certainly the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) whom I will reference him later on. So I wish people well in the future.

I want to echo, by the way, the comments that I made earlier in a different context, and that is I have never shied away from being called a politician. I know it is sort of seen as a four-letter word by some people, but I always tell people—in fact, I remember sharing a stage with another elected official who got up and said, well, I am not a politician. There was another, an MP at the same table, said you know that is the most political thing you have ever said.

Once you run for office, you are a politician; once you are elected, you are a politician. I believe it is one of the most honourable things you can do in this province. I have never had any regrets, and I have been very lucky. I have had very great encouragement and support from my constituency from day one, first representing strictly the city of Thompson, my home town. I have lived in Thompson since I was a kid; I went to high school in my community. There are eight communities now that constitute the Thompson constituency. That is what I want to start with by the way, in my comments today because I will be running again. In fact, I have already been nominated, and I look forward to the campaign. Boy, do I look forward to the campaign. I am very anxious to be into it, and I was tempted to give a little bit of advice to the Conservatives by the way because, with the people in Thompson, one thing they do not like is winter campaigns. But there is a slight problem. We have about six months of winter, so there are different ideas of what that might be. But, whether it is next month or I suppose it could be next year, the time is running out for this government. I look forward to that, and I will be certainly asking for the support of the people of my community.

I want to note by the way—one thing I also appreciate with my constituency, with the eight communities I represent, is the fact that many issues, you do not see many political dividing lines in between elections, and I want to note, for example, some of the main concerns of my constituency at this point in time—health care, for example. We have a significant doctor shortage. That is one of the major concerns right now, concerns about the situation in our hospital. It was cut back in 1995 by the provincial government. The cuts were proposed in 1993; they were delayed until after the election. Cuts were brought in. I had a constituent of mine, Ruth Gordon, who was in Winnipeg and could not get a hospital bed in Thompson for a week, and she was second on the list. That is a real concern when you are in Thompson.

And you know what the sad part is, by the way, with the doctor shortage, right now it takes three weeks to get an appointment, it takes six months to get a check-up, and there are people in Thompson who have now got to the point of having to drive to Winnipeg to get a family doctor. That is an eight-hour drive. That is not acceptable in Manitoba. That is something, by the way, that is shared by all my constituents, not just the people who support me or the New Democratic Party. It crosses party lines. It affects absolutely everyone. I want to put on the record, by the way, that those are the prime concerns in terms of health care.

Another issue, a health care issue, is that we do not have a personal care home anywhere in Thompson, anywhere in the Burntwood region. A proposal has been put in for a 35-bed unit. I want to put on the record certainly my full support for that. I know our Leader has been up and said the same thing, and I want to urge the new Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) not only to promise to build it, because I have a certain problem with Tory promises on personal care homes. I do not want to just have an approval, an announcement and a sod-turning. We need that facility, and one of the reasons our hospital does not have any available hospital beds on many occasions is because of the significant number of patients who are in that hospital who should be in a personal care facility. It is a very innovative proposal; it uses a multipurpose approach; it would be attached to the hospital.

The time has come. We need that personal care facility, and I want to strongly urge the government to approve that. Those are significant concerns. You may notice—health care, health care, health care.

Other concerns in my constituency, education. The school district in Thompson has been the hardest hit in the province, I think, by cuts, and you know what has happened, Madam Speaker? As a result, we have seen the loss of teachers, the loss of programs, and we have seen increases in property taxes. Now, my constituents have some difficulty with some of the statements that are made at budget time by Conservative ministers of Finance. They look at their property tax bill, and they see the reality of that.

* (1610)

I want to note, too, that we may be facing a new challenge. I will make a very brief comment on this because there are discussions that are ongoing right now. I know I have had the opportunity to talk to the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Newman) about this, and I certainly appreciate that he has been part of the discussions right through that. Because of the sensitive nature, I will not get into some of the internal issues, but there is a potential significant challenge to the community of Thompson right now in terms of the tax base. Inco pays a grant in lieu of taxes. It has given an indication, and this has been confirmed publicly by our mayor, that they are looking at significant cuts to the grant in lieu of taxes, and I want to say that I hope the discussions that are ongoing now will lead to some resolution of that.

But I want to put on the public record, and I will be making far more detailed comments on this when this matter is raised in more detail publicly, and I respect the fact that the school district and the city council right now will be doing that very shortly, but I want to urge Inco, which has been a good corporate citizen in this province, that has been a good corporate citizen in my community, to reflect on the fact that part of it is the partnership between the City of Thompson, the residents of Thompson, and Inco itself.

I understand the challenges facing Inco. I have said publicly—and I know the Minister of

Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman) has said similar sorts of things—that as a province we have to make sure that our mining industry is competitive, not just in a national sense but in an international sense, because when we are dealing with nickel, for example, we are competing not just in terms of Sudbury or potentially Voisey Bay, but we are competing with the Russians, we are competing with mines across the world, new mines using new technology in Australia.

We need a competitive mining industry, but I would suggest that where we can create that competitive nature is not at the local level in terms of local taxes. It is through creative approaches at the provincial level, in particular, because the provincial government has a significant impact in terms of the competitive nature of the mining industry.

I want to note, by the way, that as the former critic for Energy and Mines, when the previous minister a number of years ago, Don Orchard, brought in a number of changes to mining taxes and royalties, I supported in large part many of those changes. They reflected the changing times that we are in. We are not in the situation we were in 1998, for example, where a boom in the nickel prices led to a significant increase in the revenues to this province. I believe in one year, the province obtained more than a hundred million dollars from mining royalties.

When you are talking about nickel today at \$2.28 a pound, very little of royalties, I think that the government needs to recognize, and we all need to recognize, that one of the main things is that if you have an operating mining industry, you will always benefit as a province beginning first and foremost by the taxes, the value added by the company and by the employees and the people living in the community.

I want to say that because my comments are not strictly directed to the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman), I think he is aware that I am also urging Inco to be part of that constructive process. I would note for the record, by the way, there has been a very important development in the community. The United Steel Workers of America Local 6166 has taken the initiative to meet with the

company, to work co-operatively to try and make sure that developments such as the Birch Tree development, which is the development that will keep the mine going, can be done in an efficient way. It can be done in a way perhaps through co-operation that will bring more efficiencies than some of the traditional ways in which we dealt with the operation of the workplace, and I would commend them for that. What we need now is partnership that includes Inco, includes the union, includes the provincial and local governments.

I will have many more comments to raise, but respecting the fact there are ongoing discussions, I will leave it at that currently.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I want to deal with some of the other challenges facing some of my other communities, by the way, because I have talked here in terms of challenges facing Thompson. I represent four First Nations communities and three Northern Affairs communities, as well as two other communities that have elements of Northern Affairs communities as well. I want to say that people who have travelled the North will understand this, but those who are members of the Legislature who have not seen the economic circumstances will understand why there is such a level of frustration amongst First Nations people in this province.

I can take you to communities in my constituency that have no road access. I have already taken the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) to a number of those communities and other members have travelled. I can take you to communities that have waiting lists for housing of 200 people. I can take you to communities where you will get 12 or 14 or 16 people living in one house. I will take you to communities where the unemployment rate is never measured by official statistics but is in excess of 60-70-80 percent. I note by the way, and the member for Transcona points to this, you know, if the economic statistics for the Province of Manitoba included our First Nations fully, whether it be in terms of poverty statistics and on unemployment, our unemployment rate would be much higher. It might even be in double-digit

status, and we wonder why First Nations people get frustrated.

Take the Northern Affairs communities under the direct jurisdiction of the provincial government, where different approaches have been tried in terms of economic development, I can say there is virtually no economic development taking place in a number of those communities. Other communities, such as Wabowden which has traditionally been relying on forestry, have concerns about the future of forestry in their area as well. Each and every one of my communities is unique and different, but each and every one can tell you the same story.

What really concerns me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and what we need to accept as a challenge as a province is the lack of hope that many of our young people feel in my communities. I was in the community of York Landing the other day. The York Factory First Nation, there have been a number of attempted suicides. I asked a parent of one of the individuals involved if he could explain what was happening, and he said to me, you know, first of all, if young people in my community have a problem, we do not know where to turn. There are no mental health services. You know his son was in Thompson. Do you know what he did because he was concerned about his son's situation? He phoned the RCMP. His son spent the night in jail. By the way, the RCMP, I credit them for doing this, because this was at the request of the—because there were no mental or psychiatric services available.

One of the problems, if you are First Nations, oh, well, that is federal jurisdiction. I think it has got to get to the point in this province where we recognize the fact that we are all Manitobans. We got to get to the point where we can sit down, federal, provincial and First Nations governments, and make sure that you do not have to spend the night in jail because of the fact that if you are First Nations there are no mental health services available for you.

We have to go further because, you know, you wonder why there are people in this situation. When you are in a community with 60 or 70 percent unemployment, when you are in a

community, when you see no hope as a young person, when you see people are working hard to get an education and they come back to the community and they are unemployed, you wonder why this situation has developed. We need to give hope to young people.

I want to make a couple of suggestions here, positive suggestions, because I cannot stress first and foremost in any of my communities the importance enough of recreation. We have a number of communities because of being in the position of having flood agreement settlements, your land in particular. I just visited that community. They were holding a hockey tournament sponsored through Awasis of kids throughout northern Manitoba. This was a community that until the arena came had no recreational opportunities at all. I talked to people who were involved in that. They said it has been the one ray of hope in that community, the arena.

I want to talk about Thompson, where the school district of Mystery Lake recently took the initiative to work with community groups to open up the schools during the evening for recreational purposes. That is a creative sort of approach.

* (1620)

In my community we have not had the same difficulty that has occurred in other communities in terms of gang problems, but I know one thing about young people that I have talked to in my own community. I recently had the opportunity in Swan River to talk to young people, along with the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). A lot of young people are saying themselves, give us the chance, give us the recreational facilities, give us the support.

I know in Swan River, for example, young people were saying that basically the hangout in Swan River is the bus depot. Now, no offence to the bus depot; I have not been in the bus depot in Swan River. I am sure it is a fine facility, but not the place for young people. There should be the facilities available. I noticed the friendship centre, which we had the opportunity to visit, is taking a lead role.

By the way, here is the irony, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The provincial government cut all core funding for friendship centres in 1993. Now, it is interesting, because they are now working some projects. There are a number—I know Ma-Mow-We-Tak is one in particular. The minister was there. They are now working in partnership with the friendship centres.

I want to make a suggestion here. Reinstate the core funding for friendship centres and work in partnership. Do not cut and then go back afterwards and expect—by the way, the friendship centres, I remember when one of the ministers at the time told me they should just charge a membership fee and make up the difference. I mean, friendship centres, this is not a golf club. They wanted to charge membership fees. What are they going to do with the kids? They are going to have to have a membership fee to get inside?

I remember that song a few years ago, the quote, you got to have a membership card to get inside. I think we are headed back to that—signs, signs, everywhere signs. I think that we are seeing a generational difference in the House here. Some people do not remember that, but I think we are getting to the point in this Legislature itself where it seems you have to have a suit to get inside. Some people seem to be able to have access anytime they want, but some do not—you have to have a suit to get inside. There is something wrong with that.

I want to talk about another example of a need in my community. You know, we have homeless in our community in Thompson from throughout northern Manitoba. I want to credit the Night Riders project because what they have done, trying to provide services, is incredible, and I want to note what happened. There was a group involved initially; Salvation Army was involved; a number of different denominations were involved. They put together a plan, set up a facility, operated the facility through a number of employment grants. All they needed from the province was recognition that when people were in Thompson and they had no place to stay—many people who have social problems, substance abuse problems—all we needed was the recognition from the provincial Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) and the

provincial government that they are homeless. Do you know what the response of the provincial government was when I urged them to do nothing more than provide per diem funding based on need if someone is homeless? The response was, well, you know, many of the clients are not really homeless because—you know what the response was? They are from First Nations communities where they get free housing.

You know what is interesting, I went and spent a certain amount of time there. I want to thank our critic, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), who also spent time in the facility, Libby Davies, the federal M.P. from Vancouver, and Bev Desjarlais, the M.P. from Churchill. I know the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) was aware of this too. He has had the opportunity too, but do you know what happened? I checked. You know where most of the people are from? Shamattawa, Oxford House, Split Lake, Nelson House. I started running through because I have been in all of those communities. You know this free housing, you know you hear this free housing, right? What kind of free housing? I would invite someone to come up to Shamattawa and see the housing problems in that community, the third-world conditions. I have never seen anything in my life as bad as that. Free housing.

You are in distress in Thompson, and you are supposed to just do what? Drive home to Shamattawa? Sorry, there is no road. Catch the train? Sorry, there is no train. You are supposed to hop on a flight? Well, how many times a week does the plane get into Shamattawa? How much does it cost? You know you are down to your last couple of dollars. That is it. You have nowhere to stay. Do you know before Night Riders where the homeless ended up? In the jail cells. The Intoxicated Persons Detention Act. You know one of the prime forces behind the Night Riders was the RCMP. The RCMP has got a lot better things to do with its time and resources than deal with this, and they know that the best way of solving the individual problems that people have is by what? By getting them a place to sleep, giving them some comfort, human contact, and referring people to the kind of support services they need. I could tell you, I have talked to Michelle Laviolette, the director,

and she told me of cases where people had come back to her and said: You know if it was not for you, I would not have—and this is in a matter of months—got the help I needed. Thank you. But the government said, you have got free housing in Shamattawa, so we are not going to provide per diems here. I want to go on record as saying I am extremely disappointed in that. I want to go on record in saying: if you think that someone who is in Thompson has an option of going back to their home community, you are wrong.

I want to put on the record, by the way, that the prime source of support for the Night Riders project, in addition to a number of service clubs in Thompson and the religious groups—the Salvation Army, by the way, runs a soup kitchen there—has been the First Nations communities themselves. Strained as they are in terms of their own needs in their own community, they put up significant support to support Night Riders. The Night Riders has been dealing with on-and-off closures, crisis meetings. I want to say to this government because we have now seen some recognition nationally of the problem of the homeless: Look in our own backyard, understand the problem, come up with creative solutions, and when you have an opportunity to work with a community-based group that is dealing with the needs of the homeless, do not send back a bureaucratic response. Recognize the reality that, if you are from Shamattawa and you are in Thompson and it is minus 30 outside and you have got nowhere to stay, you are at risk. You are at risk.

How much more can I go on about this? You know, it is draining at times to try and think, when I am seeing it myself in my own community, when I see it in the communities I visit. I wish people sometimes could come and walk a mile in the shoes of my constituents. Understand what it is like to feel that frustration. I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I talked about the lack of hope amongst young people and the frustration. But do you know what? I have never encountered anything other than complete and absolute respect in any community I have ever visited. I know my constituents know I am fighting for them, but you would think, given the circumstances, people would be frustrated but they are more than willing not

only to work with myself as MLA. You know, any time a cabinet minister comes up, a number of cabinet ministers, and I want to put this on the record, have been very good in terms of visiting northern Manitoba. A number of government members who are not in the cabinet have been good in that sense, but they are more than welcoming. I want to say this particularly because I want to make a positive suggestion. We have seen some developments, I think, in this province a level of polarization, a level of frustration, that has not been there until recently, certainly with the First Nations people. First Nations people have shown their respect time and time again, and time and time again their concerns have been ignored.

I want to suggest to the Premier that he spend maybe as much time in some First Nations communities as he has spent in Switzerland. You know, he has spent more time in Switzerland in his term than he has in First Nations communities. He was in Norway House recently once. I could make cracks about the sightings of the Premier being less frequent than sightings of Elvis in the North. It is very easy to sit back in your office in this building, peering down on what is happening outside, wondering what is going on, making pious statements in this throne speech about the concerns of aboriginal people. But do you know what? I remember asking the Premier about this. He saw it working up North in the summer for Hydro in the '60s as a summer student. Come and visit us today. Spend some time. First and foremost, I would suggest to the Premier, go to the chiefs, the AMC meeting.

* (1630)

Aboriginal people have taught me a lot of things. One of them is the healing circle. If ever we needed healing in this province, it is right now. I want to put on the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of the incidents that have occurred the last little while, it can be very easy to take a set of circumstances and make very strong statements in the House that will only make things worse in the long run.

I respect the need for security in this building. I respect the very difficult task of people who on a daily basis have to deal with

that. I also would point out that the policies that are used are policies we set in this House through the government, not through MLAs because we are not involved, but through the Minister of Government Services. Even MLAs do not have direct control over this building. Let us sit down, let us look at ways of making sure we do not have confrontation. This is Manitoba. We are a small province. The Manitoba way is not police in riot gear, and I am not blaming—I am not getting into blame here. I think the suggestion made by the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) was an excellent one, to have a review, but it is not the Manitoba way. It is very easy to make statements that will inflame already difficult circumstances. We need a healing process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could spend hours talking about the situation in my communities in northern Manitoba, the First Nations communities, and I will be speaking much more about it. Certainly in the election coming up, I am going to be very clear in terms of the need for a government that will work in partnership, that will not hide in its political bunkers. I say to members opposite: We do not want to head down the path any more than we have at this point in time. There is something wrong in this province when we see the kind of frustration, the kind of alienation, and believe you me, you do not have to just judge by events in this building. All you have to do is visit the communities.

You know, I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we are seeing from this government is really disturbing. I listened to the throne speech. As I listened to it, I could almost hear word for word some stuff from the Reform Party in Ottawa, a little bit of Stockwell Day in Alberta—and the members opposite are smiling—and a heck of a lot of the Republican Party in the United States. I do not see much evidence of the Progressive Conservatives.

Quite frankly, I am curious as to what label they are going to run on the next time. If you remember last election, they went, Filmon Team, you know, and I know I put this in Hansard, three feet tall. Now, most of the Filmon Team right now are more concerned about perjury charges than they are about being able to participate in an election. And then there was

that little, tiny, you needed a microscope, Progressive Conservative. You had to kind of look at it. But, you know, what are they going to do now? Their signs are going to have what? Two tiny little, you know, Filmon Team, Progressive Conservative. What are they going to call themselves? The new Republicans? I mean, I do not know if I can say this, you know, quoting Judge Monnin, but, you know, right now when you think of the Conservative Party people think of a word that begins with "l," but I do not think I can use it here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us put it this way. I note that when Judge Monnin said he had never encountered so many liars in his career in one proceeding, they were all Conservatives. That I can say; that is parliamentary.

An Honourable Member: Exonerated the PC Party?

Mr. Ashton: The Tory back bench now, the people who are sitting there, they are saying that this exonerated—oh, thank you. The member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) says that this report exonerated the Premier (Mr. Filmon). I want to actually read. Oh, here, I want to read what Judge Monnin said. I am glad that they have allowed—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members who are trying to carry on a conversation between each other to do so outside. The honourable member for Thompson has the floor at this time.

Mr. Ashton: I just want to read some quotable quotes from Judge Monnin—Mr. Justice Monnin. My apologies. I hope you will pay just as much attention to what I am about to read as you do to the correct title, because quotation, page 16 of the report: "In all my years on the Bench I have never encountered as many liars in one proceeding as I did during this inquiry." Who were those liars? Who were those liars? The Conservative campaign manager, the Conservative chief of staff, the Conservative—the top civil servant. Do you remember Jules Benson? Jules Benson, you know, the éminence grise, you know, the guy that used to

be there like at an MTS meeting. So, you know, how many cheques did he go through here? Remember, he was the top civil servant, no involvement in the campaign. Now, Taras Sokolyk, how many times did he lie under oath? How many times did Taras Sokolyk lie under oath? Now, who was Taras Sokolyk? Campaign manager in 1995, the chief of staff.

If you want to read through the rest here, I mean, it is interesting—Taras Sokolyk, Jules Benson. Gordon McFarlane. Gordon McFarlane, the party comptroller. Allan Aitken, I mean, here is a guy that could not even remember an entire year. It is amazing, 1995, oh, it just passed by me. Oh, it was a bad year. Actually, it was a bad year if you were part of this whole thing.

Point of Order

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) just used the word "liar" in reference to myself. I believe it is unparliamentary and that he should withdraw it. He will not be able to sustain any accusation of that kind. He should not use such language in the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thank the honourable member. I did not hear that statement being made by the honourable member, but what I can do is peruse Hansard and see if the interject mikes did pick it up. I will get back to the House on that, but I would ask members to choose their words very carefully. I do understand where the members are getting it from, from the Monnin report, but I would ask not to expound too much upon the word within the House or reflect on other members. Thank you.

Mr. Ashton: I was just listing the "so many liars." I wanted to put on the record the "so many liars." I think I was up to Gordon McFarlane, and let us see, Susan Hoplock. Allan Aitken I already mentioned. Cubby Barrett, oh, Cubby Barrett. You know, Cubby Barrett, friend of many members opposite, honorary lifetime PC member. I guess we now know what it takes to be a lifetime member of the Conservative Party. Now Cubby Barrett, who now is faced with—is it not interesting?

I talked to the family of the people that used to run the hotel in Cross Lake. You remember how they tried to get a liquor licence, and they could not. What happened? Cubby Barrett bought it and Cubby got the liquor licence. Is that not interesting? Arni Thorsteinson. A rogues' gallery continues here. PC Manitoba fund chair, head of government boards, 30 years, and is a friend of Filmon. He is a long-time friend. We are talking about people who are golfing buddies, right, of the Premier, but I do not know what he did when he went out golfing. Did he have his hands over his ears, his hands over his eyes or his mouth? It was hear no evil, see no evil. These are his friends.

Bob Kozminski. Oh, yes, Bob Kozminski. Well known to members opposite. Big Bob here. The Koz. He keeps popping up here, but he summed up what this Conservative Party now has sunk to in terms of its political vision for this province. What did he say? Oh, what did he say: I will do anything to keep the NDP out. I will do anything.

There was this blink. They like to blink a lot here. I remember watching the coverage of this inquiry, and I think everybody must have been in shock. It is like here you are dealing with an inquiry, unethical behaviour, and here he is saying to everybody in public under oath, what is the root problem of this? I will do anything to take votes away from the NDP. I tell you.

I wonder how many members opposite have talked to this individual since he stated their political mantra here. This is the bottom line here. This is how low this government has sunk. How ostracized are these people really? Nudge, nudge, wink, wink, say no more. The Conservative convention, right? Are these people barred from the party? They think—

An Honourable Member: They just think their own thoughts.

* (1640)

Mr. Ashton: The member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) says they think their own thoughts. But I do not know how many times I could say this, because this is the same member

who says that the report exonerated them. I could talk about the people Monnin talked about in terms of not telling the truth: The vote-rigging plot reduced the voting rights of individuals, the violation of our democratic process. "The attempt here at vote splitting . . . was in my opinion clearly unethical and morally reprehensible." I could continue, but the vote-rigging inquiry, I think, was an indictment of 11 years of Conservative rule, of 16 years of leadership under this Premier. This is the same Premier who did not know in 1983 about the dirty tricks going on in the Conservative Party. I have talked to some of the people who ran against him. He did not know anything about Walding. We will get into that again, I am sure. Somebody asked us, well, what about that? Yes, it took four years for the story to come out, the real story to come out on the vote-rigging inquiry. If it takes 11 for the truth to come out from 1988 we will wait.

But you know what was interesting is the next scam, the next time we should have an inquiry it should be on the Jets. Save the Jets. You know what is interesting, the head of that now is running for the Conservatives in Fort Garry. Remember that? You run through this rogues' gallery here, how many of them were involved with this? What did the Premier say, when days after the election it turned out there was no real hope of saving the Jets? Well, he was out of the loop. He did not know. I did not know, he said.

Quite frankly, when we form government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we could spend most of our first term just doing inquiries into other Tory corruption, but I want to say to this government, if they believe they have been exonerated in this report, if they believe they can face the people on health care and education, I say now is the time to do it. It is time for an election. It is time to throw out this corrupt Conservative government. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure and an honour to respond to the Speech from the Throne. In 1995, when I was elected, I had the opportunity and the privilege to be the seconder to the throne speech, and in the following year, I had the opportunity to move the Speech from the

Throne. I am very pleased to do that and today to speak and to support the Speech from the Throne as well.

I would like to welcome the six new pages, for they will play an important role throughout this session. I am sure that they will learn many things and will find this very interesting.

As I was listening to the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) giving us his comments, I think this is something that all members should take to heart in this Chamber, and that is that he who is without fault should throw the first stone. I think it would be well for everyone to remember as we continue the debate within this Legislature.

I would also like to reflect on the passing of our colleague and friend Neil Gaudry, the MLA for St. Boniface. His hard work and his dedication to his constituents set a fine example and will not soon be forgotten. Certainly we will miss him in the Legislature here, and we do continue to wish his family well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I was asked to run as a member of the Legislative Assembly for Pembina, I needed to know the direction our government was taking, our direction in terms of health, education, economic growth, job creation, family services, agriculture, justice, taxation and trade, among others. At the time, I was satisfied that our government and our Premier (Mr. Filmon) knew the direction we were heading. Now, nearly five years later, I continue to be very pleased with the progress our government has made in creating a robust economy and in making our province a wonderful place in which we can live, work and raise our families, and I look forward to continuing on this path.

I would like to take a few moments to speak on a number of initiatives that were highlighted in the throne speech, initiatives that my government has committed to for the growth and well-being of this province. When our government was first elected, we had a plan for Manitoba, a plan that involved fiscal responsibility and a balanced budget. Our government, through a sound strategy, has tabled four consecutive balanced budgets to this House.

Our plan has allowed us to begin paying down the debt and to move on to the next phase of our plan for Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to tell you that we are able to lower taxes. Our government, in consultation with a lower tax commission, will determine a tax system that best serves the needs of the people of Manitoba, a system of taxation that will be fairer and beneficial to the people of this province. It is only because of the fact that we implemented the balanced budget legislation that we are in fact able to do this.

Anyone of us who has been involved in business knows that you cannot continually spend more money than you bring in. That is true whether in business or whether in our own homes, our households. It does not matter where we are. This is a concept that has to be a reality. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are in fact making this a reality and have done that for the past four years.

Our government's dedication to the well-being of children and families is evident in the NetSmarts program which will help parents monitor what their children are exposed to on the Internet. Certainly this is a concern that we, I believe, all share. We want what is best for our children, and we want to put into their minds what is best for them so that they in fact can grow up to be productive, that they can be contributors to our society and to our economy. We will establish a rating system that will help parents make informed decisions on what type of video games their children are playing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is committed to enhancing services for children with disabilities and ensuring all Manitoba children have access to quality health care. Our government is reshaping our education system to ensure that every child develops the foundation skills to read, to write, problem-solve, and compute at a high level. We will ensure parents and teachers are aware if a child requires special assistance at an early age and provide the special education necessary to help children develop.

I have had an opportunity over the past number of months and years to be a part of a school system but also be able to interact with

the parents, with teachers, as they in fact are working with our youth in developing an education strategy and continuing to promote the whole concept of standards within our schools. It is something that they want to be a part of, but this also assists them in being able to demonstrate to themselves the level that their children are at, at the time of the standards test.

Our government recognizes that parents play a very vital role in the education of children, and that is why we will continue to consult with parent councils on strategies to improve our education system. We believe that education is the key to a bright future for our children. That is why we will increase accessibility to post-secondary education and ensure that more Manitoba youth have the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education. Our youngest daughter is at university, and this is something that has certainly been stressed and again has been emphasized to us: the importance of a post-secondary education and also the impact that is added to these students who move from rural areas into the urban area in order to be able to continue their education. So I know that we are continuing to look at different avenues and possibilities to be able to assist those who are in rural areas to be able to, in fact, access education and to receive a good post-secondary education.

We will continue to ensure building the infrastructure necessary to support new knowledge-based industry and give young people the skills they need to compete in those industries. Our government will fund highways projects that will involve the upgrading and resurfacing of our transportation routes. We realize the vital role our highways play in the interprovincial and intercontinental trade. The importance of providing safe highways for trade, travel or simply commuting to work is something our government is committed to. We will continue to press the federal government for a national highways program and the renewal of the national infrastructure program.

* (1650)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this point in time we continue to press the government to in fact put the dollars that they receive for gasoline tax within the provinces so that they can put those

dollars to work within our road system. Presently, our government is putting all of the tax dollars that they receive towards highways and the maintenance of highways. It is certainly something that we want to continue to do, but it is also very important that we proceed in that manner.

One of my main duties as an MLA is to spend time with my constituents listening to their ideas and suggestions, and I am constantly impressed with the positive feedback that I receive. It was interesting again listening to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). Most of his comments were negative as they were referenced towards the area that he represents. That is unfortunate. It is extremely unfortunate that there is that negativism that seems to prevail out in his constituency.

I am fortunate to represent a constituency that is the home to many thriving businesses whose entrepreneurs are happy to be in Manitoba, taking advantage of all that our strong economy has to offer them. Our government has participated in a number of projects that have contributed to the success of businesses in the Pembina constituency, and I would like to speak about a few of them as they are a testament to the vibrant economy our government is cultivating.

Our government's approval of a second Grow Bonds issue for Acrylon Plastics is helping the Winkler manufacturing firm expand its operations. The manufacturer of molded plastic products hopes to raise \$1.3 million through Grow Bond issues, in turn creating new jobs and opportunities through its planned plant expansion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can speak to that in that in fact the Grow Bond issue, the dollars have been raised, and those dollars were raised within a few hours after the opening. Certainly this is a testament to the response that the community has towards industry within its own jurisdiction.

So I want to congratulate all those who continue to support local industry. They are, in fact, by that ensuring that industries within the community will continue to grow and thus also

demonstrate the fact that they are prepared to take a risk to ensure that this will take place.

Our government is committed to helping entrepreneurs explore new business opportunities. The Grow Bonds Program has proven extremely beneficial in allowing Manitoba companies to expand their businesses and, in turn, create more jobs. The first Grow Bond issue at Acrylon Plastics was extremely successful, and our government is pleased to assist Acrylon again. Acrylon plans to spend \$2.6 million to upgrade equipment at its Winkler plant. Financing raised through the Grow Bond issue will go toward the purchase of the specialized equipment to make molded plastic products. A railcar siding and a transfer system are also part of the expansion plans.

The company, which employs more than 100 staff, expects to create more than 20 new jobs. This again is something that we see taking place within the Pembina constituency but again adds towards the vibrancy and the positive feeling that people have towards the province but also towards their own community.

Acrylon manufactures more than 400 plastic components, including indoor and outdoor playground equipment, agricultural products, grain handling accessories, and components used by Motor Coach Industries in the manufacture of buses.

Another business that has benefited from the Grow Bonds Program in Winkler is Keystone Grain. An \$800,000 Grow Bond issue for Winkler's Keystone Grain Ltd. was part of the company's \$1.6-million expansion plan. Under the expansion plan, Keystone Grain Ltd. is expected to add 10 new jobs to its current workforce of 25. I commend everyone who is involved with that company for their commitment to producing a made-in-Manitoba product for the worldwide market. Keystone's continued growth also gives Winkler and area residents and businesses a chance to support a local company.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to expand a little on the products that Keystone, in fact, is putting out which are distributed worldwide. First of all, this is a value-added

product where they are taking sunflowers and they are adding value to them by dehulling them and putting the meal into small bags and shipping them throughout the world. They are also used, and of course many people who participate and attend baseball games will find out that one of the main ingredients at a baseball game is sunflower seeds, and you need the spits in order to make this game complete. But this is the product that in fact is produced at Keystone Grain, and they are continuing to expand their own business as they find more markets within the world and, of course, continue to also assist the entrepreneurs, the agricultural industry within their local community.

Creating more jobs in rural Manitoba is the goal of the Grow Bonds Program. I am very pleased the new jobs are being opened up in my constituency. They will certainly contribute to an even stronger Manitoba economy.

Our government is also participating in another venture that will help local businesses thrive. A Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre has been established in Morden. This will make access to information about government business services much easier for entrepreneurs in Morden area, and this is an opportunity for those who are entrepreneurs or who are just establishing a new business to be able to access information that is going to assist them as they continue to develop and expand in their own areas of expertise. By virtue of the partnership between the provincial and the federal government and the funding they have jointly provided, this and other similar outlets will be full-service satellites to the Canada Manitoba Business Service Centre in Winnipeg. The opening of this regionalization network site is an important occasion for Morden and area residents. Rural Manitoba is home to many small-, medium- and large-sized businesses, all of which play an important role in the provincial economy.

It is important that we can offer these companies access to a wide variety of services that will enhance their ability to do business. Our government is proud to support the efforts of our entrepreneurs and believes that the more we can do to assist their growth and development, the more benefits will be shared

by the entire province. I am sure the businesses here in the Morden area are excited by the opportunities that are opening to them through this office.

Another business in the Pembina constituency that is doing well is Lode-King Industries of Winkler, which recently celebrated another expansion. Lode-King Industries has an important role to play in Winkler and area. As a major manufacturer of highway trailers, not only does this firm employ hundreds of area citizens but it also helps support local suppliers. This multimillion-dollar expansion certainly bodes well for the company's future. Just several weeks ago we in fact made the announcement out there that they would be receiving a contract which was worth \$1.5 million together with SaskPool. It was an integral part of our government to be able to assist them in this area because what is happening is that the trailers that they are producing will be able to haul bigger loads just at the border of Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

So the loads that they will now be able to haul will gross—the net product that they can haul will be 56 tons, which is greater than what they have been able to handle to this point. But this is being facilitated by the fact that they have what they call the internal mechanism which is a system available to truckers so that they can now inflate and deflate the tires of their rigs, of their semis or B-trains as they are driving. So as they move from a primary road to a secondary road, they are able to adjust the pressure that they have in these tires and certainly that is going to be something that will facilitate and help in the maintenance of our roads.

Certainly as more product is being moved by highway tractor, the stress is being put onto our road system. So through this innovative approach they are certainly able to in some way try to alleviate the problems that we have on our highways. This is a start and certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see that this will be taking place and in fact will be increasing as time goes on.

It is heartening to see that people have faith in our growing Manitoba economy. In particular I am delighted to see that there are so many businesses that are dedicated to doing business in rural Manitoba. Obviously these entrepreneurs recognize the many skills and abilities of our rural workers and suppliers. Our government is proud to support the efforts of our entrepreneurs. We believe the more we can do to assist their growth and development, the more the benefits will be shared by all Manitobans.

Another positive development in the Pembina constituency was the turning of the sod on the new water treatment plant in Morden. Our government is proud to participate in this project because it holds such importance and significance for people living in southern Manitoba. Clean, safe drinking water is an essential service in any community. Morden's water treatment plant was originally built in 1956. Although the existing treatment plant was upgraded in 1961 and again in 1971, it was simply not keeping up with the growing needs of the town of Morden. Indeed, with some 5,000 residents, the community continues to grow beyond many of our expectations.

Water and sewer development provides the means to sustain residents and also helps to attract commercial enterprises, particularly value-added agricultural opportunities that may have significant infrastructure requirements. By investing in projects like this, we provide the services necessary for future residential and commercial development.

Another interesting task force that is out there is the International Joint Commission, and I know at the present time they are looking at the whole strategy of trying to alleviate the water problems that are created during flooding and especially we saw this in 1997. The international joint committee is looking at the possibility of in fact erecting a dam on the Pembina River. Now certainly I support this and endorse this venture. I believe that it would have a number of very positive benefits for the area, for the southern part of the province. First of all, it would be a tremendous enhancement for those who are requiring irrigation for the production of potatoes and other specialty crops. It would be a tremendous advantage also in the

processing industry to be able to attract other industries into our communities that are wet industries that require a lot of water.

The whole area of tourism would be enhanced through an initiative such as this. It would create a fairly large body of water in one of the most picturesque parts of the province of Manitoba and certainly would draw many people into the area. This would of course be coupled with the Holiday Mountain as well which year round has either skiing or golfing, and so at any time of the year you can come out to the Pembina Valley—

An Honourable Member: Nice cottages there.

Mr. Dyck: —and participate in the sports activities. An honourable member has just indicated that there are lovely cottages out there, and certainly there is opportunity for people to come out there and to enjoy nature at its finest.

Infrastructures like the one I have just mentioned here are an important part of our efforts to improve the quality of life in rural Manitoba. By opening up new opportunities for growth through sustainable development, we ensure the long-term viability and prosperity of our communities and the province as a whole.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to take some time to talk about education within this province. As a former educator and as the legislative assistant to the Minister of Education, the Honourable Jim McCrae, I would also like to touch upon education matters for a few moments.

I am pleased our government has increased funding to Manitoba's public school system by \$17.7 million for the next school year. We must have an education system that prepares our children for the challenges they face by giving them the confidence and skills to seek and obtain meaningful employment. This funding commitment will go a long way to support the educational needs of our youth and overall strength of our province. Our government will provide an average of 2.3 percent increase across Manitoba in the 1999-2000 school year. This brings the total budget to \$779 million and increases funding for innovative programs.

Divisions will be able to keep surplus funds resulting from cost savings in operations, building maintenance and central administration. Funds from such savings could be redirected to the classroom.

In addition, the provincial government has committed to provide at a minimum a further 2 percent increase in overall education funding in the year 2000-2001. As well, there will be no increase in the mill rates for the education support levy, which is the provincial portion of the property tax collected for educational purposes.

Important changes in this year's funding formula include increased base support for classroom costs, increased funds for technology in the classroom such as computer hardware and software, increased funds to early literacy intervention programming and for programming for at-risk students, increased funds for professional development and more funds for school bus purchases.

Education continues to be the second highest spending priority of our government after health care. We know that the education system is one of the building blocks of a healthy society, and we are dedicated to supporting our schools and school divisions with the resources available.

As a child's primary caregiver and first educator, parents play a vital role in the development of their child's loving of learning. Our government recognizes this important contribution and encourages parents to take an active role in their children's formal education.

I had the opportunity, as many of you did, in the month of February to visit schools and to be able to sit down with teachers and students in the classroom, visit with them, talk to them, and then we had the opportunity to read to them, to share with them the love of reading. I had the opportunity to do this in numerous classrooms, and it was a real highlight for me to see the love that our students have to learn, to be able to find out new things in life and the eagerness that they have in doing that. That is something that we as politicians, as educators, as people involved within our constituencies, want to continue to promote and foster.

As a result, the province, along with representatives from Manitoba's Association of Parent Councils, hosted a series of meetings throughout the province involving local parent council representatives. The meetings, parents as partners into the new millennium, offer parent council representatives the opportunity to provide input and feedback on Manitoba's education system and the role of parent councils.

I attended the Morden meeting and was pleased to hear the positive feedback and constructive criticism regarding our education system. Our government recognizes the important role parents have to play in the ongoing development of the education system. We have introduced a series of initiatives to strengthen the role of parents in school-based decision making, including legislation allowing for the creation of advisory councils for school leadership to enhance parental involvement and ongoing activities aimed at providing additional information to parents, such as a newsletter, parent guides on curriculum, and regular meetings with parent groups.

Education has always been a top priority of the Filmon government. By encouraging greater parental involvement, we will build an even stronger education system. It is my hope that together we can make a significant difference for our children and prepare them for success in the 21st Century.

* (1710)

I would thank all the parents who participated in the regional meetings, and I want to encourage others to become more involved in their children's education. It was unfortunate the evening that we had the parent council meeting in Morden, that we had one of the few snowstorms that we encounter in Manitoba and have encountered in Manitoba this past year, but I must congratulate those who came out. In fact, the majority of the councils were represented. They took the evening, and they took the challenge of driving on the roads to come out and in fact to be able to meet with us and to give us their ideas that they had regarding the whole part of parent councils.

Our government believes in increased parental involvement, and I am confident that

meetings such as these will provide us with input that will assist us as we move forward in building an even stronger education system for our children.

Helping college and university students succeed with their studies remains a strong commitment of the Filmon government as well. In today's increasingly competitive workforce, having access to high quality education is critical, so any time we can offer students scholarships and bursaries we are creating a winning situation for both our young people and future employers as well. One of the ways we are doing this is through the creation of a five-year, \$25-million commitment to the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative. The program will match eligible scholarship and bursary funds for students at Manitoba's public universities and colleges. The fund acts as a catalyst, doubling the contributions made by the private donors and other partners such as corporations and post-secondary education.

The province has committed up to \$5 million for each year over a period of five years to match eligible contribution dollars, dollar for dollar, and up to 10,000 students can benefit from the enhanced bursary and scholarship funding each year. Money raised by institutions must be new donations to qualify from matching contributions from the province. The individual institutions decide on how the scholarships and bursaries are to be awarded.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

The Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative was introduced in 1997 to assist students attending the province's public universities and colleges. Previously, the commitment to fund was decided annually. This commitment will assist universities and colleges to conduct broad and multiyear fundraising campaigns to more effectively attract private donors. This initiative coupled with Manitoba's Learning Tax Credit is evidence of our government's commitment to our scholars. The entire community benefits when our best and brightest post-secondary students study in Manitoba.

Making sure Manitoba schools have the technological infrastructure needed for the new millennium is another goal of our government. Computers are becoming integral not only to classroom instruction but also to students' ability to conduct their research. It is essential that we support efforts to make this type of technology available. Our government has committed \$5 million in provincial funding to support computers through cabling and wiring in schools. Each school division will receive at least \$5,000 through this program. A total of \$25 million has been allocated to this program this year, and a further \$2.5 million will be available in 1999 to 2000. Schools that have already upgraded their cabling and wiring may use the money for other technology-related expenditure to benefit students. The initiative complements other provincial programs aimed at getting more machines into classrooms. The province has also donated more than 7,000 pieces of computer hardware and provides a continuous support of \$200,000 for computers for schools and library programs.

Certainly, Madam Speaker, this is evidenced within our schools as they have accessed and taken these computers that have been offered to them and put them into their own schools. It certainly has enhanced their programming, and we are appreciative of that. In an increasingly wired society, we must be sure that our young people have ready access to a variety of communication technology, be it pen and paper or computer and print. These measures will help ensure our youth are prepared to deal with the challenges of an information society.

I would also like to comment on a pilot project in wood products manufacturing at Garden Valley Collegiate in Winkler which is off to a strong start, thanks in part to a special provincial grant. The wood-links program is an important one as it helps prepare skilled, knowledgeable workers for growth in the wood manufacturing industry. I am pleased that our government can support this worthy pilot project. The wood-links project is a one-year pilot project in wood products manufacturing offered by the Garden Valley School Division No. 26. A consortium of industry and the school division is offering the wood technology program in response to a growing industry

demand for skilled workers. The pilot project delivers two courses, Senior 4 Wood Products Manufacturing and Senior 4 Advanced Wood Products Manufacturing. Students take a variety of courses ranging from business skills to hands-on manufacturing.

I would like to thank Garden Valley School Division for creating a pilot project that provides students with valuable skills that will help fill an industry need. Growth in the wood manufacturing industry, technical improvements, increasing automation and the move to greater value-added production underscore the need for more and better prepared entry-level workers. This project goes a long way to matching skilled and enthusiastic young people with the needs of Manitoba manufacturers. I know that our community and the people within the industry are very appreciative of this program as it also assists them as they hire new employees.

Another area I would like to touch on, Madam Speaker, is health. There has been a considerable amount of attention surrounding the state of health care in Manitoba. The opposition constantly takes us to task for not doing enough for Manitobans in terms of health care. I am proud of our government's health care achievements and our dedication to creating a health care system that is there for Manitobans now and in the future.

Health care is our government's No. 1 priority. Provincial spending on health care has increased by 45 percent in the past 11 years to almost \$2 billion. As a percentage of our total provincial budget, health care spending is now almost 35 percent, by far our greatest expenditure. Each day more than \$5 million is spent on Manitoba's health care system.

Ever since our government took office, we have been working towards the modernization of the health care system. Our plan involves relieving pressure on hospital beds, hiring more health care professionals, and reducing waiting lists for diagnostic services and surgery. We have taken a number of positive steps in this direction. For example, construction of the new \$34.9-million, 94-bed acute care Boundary Trails Health Centre has begun.

The new health centre will serve the health care needs of Morden, Winkler, and the surrounding community. The regional health authority plans to designate 40 beds for medical patient use, seven for obstetrics, 18 for surgery patients, four for special care needs and 25 beds for rehabilitation assessment. To date about 510 piles have been put into the ground. That is almost completed, and they will be starting with the construction of the actual building itself within the next few weeks.

Other initiatives are underway around the province. More than 600 new long-term care beds are approved for construction. Since 1988, over 900 personal care home beds have been added. By opening up additional personal care home beds, hospital beds can be freed up for acute care patients.

Home care services have also been enhanced, enabling Manitobans to remain in their homes longer and helping to alleviate pressures on hospital beds.

We have also established a \$7-million fund to recruit and retain nurses in Manitoba because we know the vital role they play in the health care system.

The home care in the Pembina constituency is working well. I have had an opportunity to meet with and talk to a number of people who are receiving home care, and certainly, Madam Speaker, they are very appreciative of what they are getting. I have a number of constituents who are a hundred years of age. They would say that they are getting almost younger by the day, but they realize that the years are moving on. They in some cases are receiving home care; others cases not, but certainly we appreciate the fact that they can stay within their own home and receive the attention that they need.

* (1720)

In addition our government has made substantial progress in reducing the waiting time for diagnostic and surgical services. This year more than 30,000 mammograms will be performed, some with the support of two new mobile mammography units. An increase in dialysis funding means more treatments will be

provided. In addition, the number of hip and knee surgeries and MRI scans performed in 1999 will increase, and new state-of-the-art equipment will enhance patient care and treatment at the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation.

I know that there are challenges to ensuring our health care system is both responsive and affordable to Manitobans. While change can be difficult and generate controversy, it is necessary to ensure that our health care system is there for Manitobans now and in the future.

Our government also remains committed to applying pressure on the federal government to improve the level of funding it provides to the provinces for health care. My colleague Charleswood MLA Myrna Driedger and I spearheaded a petition urging Ottawa to restore funding to Manitoba's health care system, and we were pleased that we had a very good response to that.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I would just like to take a moment to thank some of my colleagues who have indicated that they will be retiring. First of all, I would like to thank the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay). I very vividly remember about a year after I was elected, he and I had an opportunity to visit. In fact, he initiated the conversation and we went out for dinner one evening. He encouraged me and certainly told me of the joys that he had experienced as an MLA. I just want to say to the member for Springfield that it was a real encouragement to me, and I want to thank you for the support that you had given myself and the Pembina constituency over the years that you have been in office. We appreciate that very much.

To the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey), I certainly have appreciated her input and the opportunity that she gave me over the past few years as I was involved in a committee which was purchasing art for the Province of Manitoba. Again, it gave me a total new insight into some of the workings and the responsibilities that we have as MLAs.

Then to the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger), certainly he has been an inspiration to

me as he continues to support the efforts that we had in Pembina but also as you continue to support me personally.

And last but not least, the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey), thank you very much for your contributions. I could go on and on, but I see that my time is up. So thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, let me also join my voice to others in welcoming all of us back into this House after such a long absence. It is a shame that we did not have a fall sitting when we could have dealt with some of the pressing business that needs to be dealt with. But we are back here now and I expect that we will have a good exchange of views and that we will have an election sooner I hope rather than later.

I want to welcome the pages. Yours is a unique position in this House because you get to listen and watch but you do not get to speak except in very hushed tones. Sometimes I am sure you go home and you say: My goodness, what in the world were those people doing? Other times, you may be privileged to sit in on some history which will be recorded in Manitoba's history books. A lot of what we do here will not be recorded in any of the popular books, but in my short number of years here there have been a number of events which I think have been important in public policy, some of them positive and some of them negative. Pages have sat through those, and so I commend you for taking time out of your studies and for applying to be here.

I am just a little bit concerned about the imbalance in gender, but I am sure that that has been simply a correction for the past imbalances historically in the other direction. So I welcome the pages and, of course, our new Sergeant-at-Arms as well to his duties.

Madam Speaker, in responding to the throne speech one cannot help but be struck by the revisionist history with which it starts its statement to all Manitobans. I want to suggest to members opposite and particularly to the Premier that someone who has just had to take responsibility for the worst electoral scandal in

Manitoba's history ought perhaps to have more regard for the truth in his throne speech.

I want to direct honourable members to the first paragraph on page 3 of the throne speech, and I quote: Just over a decade ago when my government was first elected to office, it set as one of its primary goals the need to address Manitoba's critical and unsustainable budgetary situation. Deficit financing and other misguided public policies were undercutting our fiscal integrity, and so on and so forth and so forth.

Madam Speaker, the revisionist history that this government has been given to since it was elected is appalling, but it is particularly appalling that, after they have been convicted of taking part in a odious scandal, they would say that they inherited a deficit.

They inherited a surplus. They know that. The Public Accounts says that. The Government of Canada's Public Accounts says that. The Auditor says that, and even the budget acknowledges that in 1988-1989 there was a surplus of \$58 million, which the government then used to create the Fiscal Stabilization Fund by borrowing \$200 million on the market, increasing our paper debt so they could show a deficit. Even their own Finance minister finally had the integrity to show the true situation last year. Yet, in this throne speech, the myth, the revisionist history is once more put before Manitobans as though it had any truth to it at all.

This government inherited a surplus. This government ran the worst deficit in Manitoba's history. This government ran a deficit \$200 million higher than the preceding government, Madam Speaker, \$766 million. Is that our figure? No, that figure is on page 23, Financial Review and Statistics of this government's budget—1992-93, \$766-million deficit; 1988-89, \$58-million surplus. The throne speech in a government that has just been convicted by a court of public opinion, by a former Chief Justice of this province, ought to have a higher regard for the truth than it apparently has.

Madam Speaker, the deception of budgets as reflected in this throne speech is also something that the government should have some concern about, rather than again putting forward to

Manitobans untruths. Since 1994-95, this government has run \$918 million more in revenues than it budgeted for. Every year, it has had surpluses of \$143 million in excess of budgeted revenue, \$158 million in excess of budgeted revenue, \$179 million—getting bigger, it is getting bigger every year—in excess of budgeted revenue, \$238 million in excess of budgeted revenue. In 1998-99, the projection announced in the third quarter statement—you should read it—says there will be \$210 million more in revenue than your Finance minister told us would be the case when he stood up in the House. Did he know that? Of course, he did, because he started out with projections that were based on the previous falsehood. So of course the next set of projections was going to be incorrect.

All of these numbers, Madam Speaker, are corrected to take into account the shell game in regard to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which the Auditor has also commented on. The member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) is remembering fondly his holiday with Cubby Barrett in Cuba, I think. He has just woken up.

* (1730)

The Auditor has said in his report that the transfers in and out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund do not follow generally accepted accounting practices. This is a government whose Finance minister was a chartered accountant, and he cannot seem to figure out generally accepted accounting practices. Of course, their election accountant could not figure out generally accepted accounting procedures either, and he managed to hide some evidence. This is a man who is a certified fraud inspector. That is a very interesting designation. It should be interesting the next time his certification comes up for review.

Madam Speaker, the throne speech starts out from incorrect, untrue statements about our economic past. So how can we have any confidence that it will have any usefulness as a statement for our economic future? You know, we would have thought that a government at the end of its mandate, at a critically important stage, public opinion and public trust at a low ebb, there would have been some positive, frank

acceptance of the challenges and opportunities that face Manitobans. Where in the throne speech is there a strategy to deal with the tragic shortage of nurses and doctors? This current Health minister when he was Finance minister put forward budgets that required the laying off of 1,000 nurses, and now, surprise, surprise, we have a shortage of nurses. When he laid those nurses off, Madam Speaker, what did he think they were going to do? Did he think they were going to go home and sit and wait for the phone to ring? Of course, they could not do that. They have families, they have homes, they have spouses, they have children. So they went and got other work. Sometimes they got other work in Manitoba outside the nursing profession because this government destroyed that profession as a hopeful opportunity for young men and women in the future. Sometimes they took their skills as nurses and they went to the United States and they went to other jurisdictions, so they are lost to us.

We might have expected to hear in this throne speech a positive, progressive plan for training and recruiting and retaining health professionals. Not a word; not a word. Garden Hill, an aboriginal community, is supposed to have eight full-time nurses. It is lucky to have two. This government forgets, I guess, that it cut back on the Access programs, cut back on its nurses training programs, ended the RN programs in hospitals, went to a full BA, BN program, and now it says we got a critical nursing shortage—hello. It is good they woke up. The throne speech is silent on what they are going to do about it.

What is the long-term vision of this government for health care? The long-term vision seems to be summed up in vice-presidents of the WHA that spring up faster than rabbits or spring flowers. Every time there is a nursing problem or a food problem or a bed shortage, there is another vice-president to respond to it. A vice-president that is paid what, eighty thousand, ninety thousand? What is Mr. Webster paid? Three hundred and twenty thousand. What is Rod Thorfinnson, last year from the Health Sciences Centre, going to be paid as he acts as a consultant now that he is no longer the CEO of that health centre? Three hundred and forty thousand dollars. That is nice

termination leave, Madam Speaker. That would pay the salaries of six or seven full-time nurses.

Where is the strategy? Where is the strategy to deal with rural doctors? Their strategy is to fly in doctors from South Africa. Good people, well trained, good professionals. They stay six months and they leave, and we bring them in at enormous cost. We move their whole families. We give them a very high salary, and they stay for a few months and they leave. Perhaps a few of them stay a year or two, but it is a revolving door of rural doctors.

Instead of going to those communities, instead of going particularly to our remote and northern communities and saying who do you want to train? Who are your skilled and excellent young people that want to be doctors and nurses and health professionals in your community? How can we work with you to make sure that your people get good training and come home and work there with ongoing education? Where is your vision for telemedicine as an ongoing education and support for rural health professionals? There is no vision in this document.

What about public education? Again, Madam Speaker, a government that has been found wanting in the court of public opinion and in the Monnin inquiry should be more careful with the truth when it comes to public education. We have listened to the former Minister of Education. We have listened to the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson). We have listened to the Premier (Mr. Filmon). All tell us that they have increased their support to public education and not just by a little bit.

These people tell us that they have increased their support to our schools by over a hundred million dollars. The Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) is here with us today, and he knows that is not true. I am looking forward to his acknowledging in this House, as he goes about setting forth at some point, I hope, his hopes for our public education system, I am looking forward to him acknowledging that the schools of this province are getting less money today to run their schools than they did in 1992-93.

Madam Speaker, in 1992-93, the FRAME Report, which I am sure the minister, now that he has been minister for a month or so, knows, stands for Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education. It was designed by a Conservative government and implemented by an NDP government, and it has been in place now for about 20 years. It is a very stable accounting framework. On page 40, as there is in every FRAME Report, there is an analysis of the operating fund revenue for schools.

What this is—the current Finance minister knows this too as an educator—is a list division by division of what the schools get to educate our children from the provincial government and from other sources. It is not a document that is political. It is an audited document. It is not a document designed by us or, frankly, by you. It is a report of the Department of Education, an administrative document, and it shows that in 1992-93 the schools of this province got \$732 million to educate our children, to provide computers, to provide textbooks, to provide teachers, to provide school buses, all of the things that happen in schools, to meet the needs of special needs children, to teach the many subjects that our schools teach—\$732 million in 1992-93. In 1997-98, that had fallen, not risen, Madam Speaker and Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae). That had fallen to \$702 million. This year it has gone up. It has gone up all the way to \$709 million. It is still \$24 million less than it was seven years ago.

So we have listened to the Premier of this province make a half-hearted apology for providing incorrect information, though he has yet to make an apology for misleading the House in regard to the items that have been raised before the matter of privilege. When, Madam Speaker, will we hear the former ministers of Education, plural, and the current Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) apologize to the students, the parents, the teachers, the trustees of the Manitoba school system for misleading them, misleading them in spite of having in their hands the data that was truthful, that we have cut funding to our public schools since 1992-93 by \$24 million?

* (1740)

Bad enough that there has been no increase, bad enough that it has not kept up with inflation, but much worse that you have told them that you have increased your funding by over a hundred million dollars, and that is not true. This government has not just failed the ethics test when it comes to elections, it has failed the ethics test in its budget, in its honesty about revenues, in its revisionist history in regard to surpluses and deficits and in regard to its funding of public education, Madam Speaker.

We might have looked in this throne speech for a positive, hopeful, forward-looking understanding that the future economy which the KPMG report speaks about in some detail is inextricably linked to the training opportunities that are offered to young people like the pages that are here with us today. There is no understanding of that in this report. The Roblin commission seven years ago said you should double the training opportunities in our community colleges. Instead, there are fewer kids, young adults and older adults taking community college courses because you have chosen to put your money into private sector training colleges offering no credential degrees, not the kind of training that can be transported with you but quick-fix training at high, high cost, and you have squandered the \$150 million that the federal government made available to you as a training bridge into full responsibility that the province will inherit after this fiscal year.

It is a shame that young people cannot get into the courses they need, that no new apprenticeable trades have been developed by this government, that there are waiting lists that force young Manitobans to seek their future elsewhere because they cannot get the training here, and at the very same time, Madam Speaker, at the very same time industry after industry after industry tells you, tells KPMG, tells Manitobans that we have a critical skills shortage. What an indictment of 11 years of government, that after 11 years and all the changes that you knew were happening in our economy and all of the framework and apparatus that the Honourable Duff Roblin offered you in that report, that you have not got around to opening it 11 years after you were first elected. What an indictment of your lack of vision for the

young people of this province, for the families who want their children to have access to training and education that could get them into the skills that are so needed in our economy.

You know, I took the opportunity, Madam Speaker, to review the KPMG report, and I noticed that one of the things that it says is: However, despite significant growth, and there has been growth, there are industry sectors that have not yet been able to capitalize on existing human resources and research capacities.

I guess that is consultant jargon for shortages of skills, and the next sentence makes that plain: These include information technology, areas of health, biotech research, where skill shortages and research deficits are reported by community and local leaders. What an indictment, Madam Speaker.

This throne speech found it impossible to use the words "child poverty." I guess that is because it is very embarrassing after telling Manitobans over and over and over again what a wonderful economic record you have and yet to know over and over and over again that you are the child poverty capital of Canada. There is a disconnect here, Madam Speaker. If things are so good, how can it be that so many families have lost income and so many children live in poverty? If you do not care about the children, then at least care about the economy because we know, and we know that you know, that poor children do badly in school. They do badly in the world of work. They are disadvantaged from the get-go, Madam Speaker, and you have had at your capacity, at your fingertips the Perry High/Scope data, Fraser Mustard's data.

So what are we going to do with that? Well, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is going to convene a round table. Is that not grand? We will have canapés and cocktails at a round table, and poor children will still sit outside the door excluded, because no one in this government is prepared to do the relatively inexpensive and, in the long term, very efficient things that need to be done. You even had Fraser Mustard out here a few years ago to talk about this to all your colleagues. Did you do anything about it? No. Does this throne speech do anything about it? No, it does not.

Madam Speaker, when we get to the area of health care, there the deceit is just as bad as it is in education. We have heard how this government has increased its funding to health care, and indeed that is true. There is a small increase in what has been spent in health care. Is it anywhere near what the Minister of Finance, now the Minister of Health, said? No. In 1993-94, \$1.783 billion; five years later, \$1.853 billion. Actual change over that period of time, \$70 million. This is the government that said last year that they were spending \$100 million more in health care—\$100 million more than what? Manitobans might be excused for asking.

In 1996-97, they spent \$1.815 billion. The next year, the year that they said they were spending \$100 million more, they spent \$1.853 billion—\$38 million more. Tory promises have a 33 percent value. You have to discount them by 66 percent to get anywhere near the truth. What will happen this year? Well, we do not know, but we have had the third quarter report from the Minister of Finance, the new Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), his first one, Madam Speaker. In the third quarter—if I can lay my hands on it; got it here somewhere—the health spending is kind of revealing. The nine months through the year, they were \$27 million under budget. This is a Finance minister and Health minister who got this big commitment to health care this year. They tell us that in this fourth quarter—in fact, this same statement talks about a warrant that is going to authorize a whole lot more health spending.

Well, Madam Speaker, unless they spend like Billy-be-damned, they are going to have a hard time getting to their budget level because they are \$27 million behind their budget after the third quarter. This is the great commitment to health care.

* (1750)

I want to turn now to some broader issues about vision. I would commend to all members of the House John Ralston Saul's *Reflections of a Siamese Twin*. It is a bit lengthy perhaps and perhaps goes around arguments longer than they need to be gone around. But, you know, he points out that the enduring characteristic of Canada has been reconciliation. He points out

that only occasionally in our history have we descended to play the race card or play the class card or into the kind of narrow partisanship that characterizes some of the Quebec-Canada debates. He points out that historically we have always found a way back from that extremism and that reconciliation and a recognition of the complexity of our society, of our fabric as a nation, have always ultimately won the day thus far in our history. He reminds us that we are, if not the most stable, one of two or three of the most stable and long-lived democracies in the world. We are not a young country in democratic sense. We have had responsible government in this country since the 1830s.

So, Madam Speaker, he speaks great wisdom to us, and when we look at the temptations that are succumbed to all too often by some members and some members of our media, particularly some of the talk shows on the radio, that would play the race card, would exacerbate tensions and invite people into hatred, we are departing fundamentally from the nature of this country and from what this House should stand for, a recognition that all have a place here, all have gifts to share, all have voices to be heard, all have needs and all have resources.

I know we all regret when we fall away from that ultimate understanding of our nation as a nation of reconciliation. We must understand that in particular those among us who are disadvantaged, either disadvantaged because of the structure of our laws or the structure of our history, but the way in which events have simply played themselves out, have a right to their deep anger. When we respond to that with blame and with invitations to racism, we do our history a disservice, we do ourselves a disservice, we do those that we would separate out from us by some criteria a grave disservice.

So I would invite all members to always remember what I think Saul is correct in pointing out, and that is that the history of our nation when it is successful is a history of reconciliation. It is a history of tolerance. It is a history of people from different groups welcoming and inviting and seeing the gifts brought by those of other groups. It is a fascinating history that he tells us in this book,

of how for example Emily Carr's work as a West Coast artist was first understood because of a Francophone senior member of the National Gallery in Ottawa. He tells us the story of Baldwin giving up one of his seats so that a Francophone, Papineau, could have a seat after he had been defeated in the House on narrow partisan terms. These are in the old days of multiple seats. So we should be reminded of that part of our history whenever we are tempted to fall into easy solutions that separate out people by some criteria or another and then cast blame on them.

Madam Speaker, I am looking forward to our time together. I am looking forward to getting the new boundaries passed and getting into an election in which we can come before Manitobans with positive alternatives. I am looking forward to the opportunity to again offer

candidacy to a riding and to offer my willingness to serve again in this noble enterprise, and I underline the comments of my colleague from Thompson that this is indeed an honourable thing we do and that those who debase it and demean it should not be allowed to do so. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? [agreed]

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I move, seconded by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 7, 1999

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